



Diversity in Corporations

Making it Work: An Overview

Youlanda M. Gibbons



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Shekinah Glory

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Preface

Just as many other higher education institutions, the University of Massachusetts—Amherst responded to the “affirmative action crisis” and the recurring debates over gender and race policies by eliminating affirmative action preferences across its business units. However, what was most disturbing and perplexing personally was the action undertaken by the university to change the name of its Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action. Today, the title reads “Office of Equal Opportunity and *Diversity*.”

Like the university, I wondered if other work organizations were replacing the language of *affirmative action* with *diversity*. What did this mean *really*? How does an organization *do* diversity? What motivates or influences organizations to enact diversity? How do organizations enact diversity? What are the key features or characteristics of organizations that tend to enact diversity? And are diversity behaviors within the organizations actually new and improved versions of affirmative action practices?

When turning to the sociological and organization research literature, I was dismayed to discover that there was *very* little evidence that addressed my questions. In fact, my search of the scholarly and popular literature on diversity in organizations revealed a growing body of research on how workplace diversity is *theorized*. Most studies attempt to apply the concept of diversity as a framework for analyzing political power, language structures, social identity, cultural values, intergroup relations, and discrimination.

This research project sought *not* to provide evidence of how diversity is conceptualized, but rather *how it is implemented* in the corporate sector. This focus is important, given the degree to which *talk* of diversity in organizations has pervaded the vast majority of corporations, colleges and universities, federal agencies, and nonprofit organizations. As argued by Jacoby (1994), workplace diversity may have become somewhat of an organizational and educational buzzword, signifying everything,

anything—and nothing. The American notion to *embrace* diversity has become a fashionable dimension of many organizations, and as a result, has exerted pressures to implement diversity strategies and programs.

My motivation to conduct research in this area was fueled by the fact that the rise of diversity as corporate strategy occurred at a time when support for affirmative action and civil rights laws pertinent to the workplace was under great scrutiny. During this time, corporate messages of *valuing diversity*, *encouraging inclusion*, *managing diversity*, *retaining diversity*, *supporting diversity*, and *fostering diversity* tend to reflect a recent way of thinking about not only employees, but customers and the global economy as well.

The linkage between *valuing* and *incorporating* diversity is essential. Today, the majority of scholarly research on diversity in organizations fails to provide evidence of this linkage. It is my aim to provide evidence of how *valuing diversity* translates into diversity behaviors within one of the nation's most critical, innovative, and globally dependent employment industries—the Information Technology Sector.

CHAPTER 1

Women, Minorities, and the American Corporation

The eagle, soaring, clear-eyed, competitive, prepared to strike, but not a vulture. Noble, visionary, majestic, that people can believe in and be inspired by, that creates such a lift that it soars. I can see that being a good logo for the principled company. Okay, guys, enough bullshit.

—Ira Jackson, Dean of Claremont University

Peter F. Drucker and Masatoshi Ito
Graduate School of Management

I have always been enamored of corporations. They wield great power, money, and resources. As such, they are positioned to make a significant impact on societies. Corporations, whether they are good or bad, shape societies. Their influence goes beyond the board room, as corporations shape and drive legislation on myriad issues including regulation, medical and technological research, tax structures, and education. Often beloved for what they do and hated for what they do not do, corporations are a viable part of American life that lead us to some unexpected ways of understanding the relationships among labor, gender, and race.

The relationships among labor, race, and gender are inextricably linked to corporate structures and behaviors. Specifically, policies, practices, strategies, and activities represent how the corporation functions. It is within the constraints of these mechanisms that we gain a fuller understanding of how labor calls for a capacity to deal with people. In a world that is filled with swift and increasing demographic change, corporations are shifting attention to new and emerging markets. Accompanying this

change is an expansion into the world's labor market. In the United States, women and minorities are becoming increasingly desired populations for the new and improved global workforce.

Women, minorities, and the American corporation—it is an old issue, but one that is still very much alive. It has new nuances and insights. With nearly fifty years of experience of recruiting and hiring women and minorities, much can be explored to determine why and how corporations seek out women and minority talent. Amidst social forces, both external and organizational, corporations continue to grapple with the issue of women and minorities in the firm. Examining corporate structures and behaviors is a good way to discover why and how companies respond to and interpret their labor needs of women and minorities. Why and how do these groups fit into the existing structures and behaviors of the firm?

Since the early 1990s, American corporations have been fascinated with what is termed “diversity.” Companies throughout the country have instituted and jumped on the diversity bandwagon. A decade and a half ago, “fierce” and “bold” characterized corporations' actions about diversity. It was not uncommon to pick up the *Wall Street Journal*, *Fortune 500*, or *Forbes* and see a front-page article on diversity in American corporations. Strange, somewhat—what is going on in corporate America to allow for such a watershed of support of diversity at this period in America's history? In fact, what is going on in American society to substantiate such support of diversity? These basic questions allow us to give pause to American corporations.

It is then important to determine what motivates their behavior to adopt and implement diversity strategies to pursue women and minorities. In what ways do they seek out and retain these groups? Do corporations experience challenges or frustrations when they pursue women and minorities, and are there implications for these experiences? The search for answers to these questions leads to two distinct discussions: one concerning the influence of the external environment; and the other leading to a discussion of organizations' arrangements and behaviors.

In describing why and how corporations adopt and implement diversity strategies, I have drawn on empirical and interview data from a random sample of information technology corporations from across the country. When considering the type of industry that might be struggling

to find qualified women and minorities, those related to science and engineering came to mind. Over the past several decades, the nation has called attention to the underrepresentation of women and minorities in science and engineering. What better sector to explore in terms of its diversity efforts? However, it is important to gain more than an elementary insight into the nation's information technology sector and its needs and conditions for labor. As the IT sector expands and continues to flourish, I consider how its growth affects the trajectory of corporation's perspectives on women and minorities as employees.

National reports suggest that the information technology sector in the United States is a key pillar of the U.S. economy. It is attractive, prevalent, and dynamic. It continues to attract the attention of investors and federal agencies looking to transfer information quickly, safely, and accessibly. Information technology is regarded as an engine of growth and rapid change across the global economy. A growing body of literature suggests that information technology is driving national productivity. Many researchers agree that no one could predict the pace of progress in the information technology sector. Twenty years ago, computing was associated with stand-alone business systems involving an enormous amount of processing. Now, digital technologies are bountiful and powerful. They have transformed computing into batch processing, batch processing into time-sharing, time-sharing into personal computing, and, as of late, personal computing into information appliances connected to the Internet (National Research Council 2001). Beginning with the "supercomputer" to servers to desktops to portables, information technology has captured the imagination, creativity, productivity, and profitability of nearly every industry in the U.S. economy. The almighty "microprocessor" has changed fundamentally the ways in which people interact, communicate, conduct business, and produce and access information.

Taking into account the sector's slowdown (resulting from an economic recession) from the end of 2000 into 2002, information technology intensive industries, namely software, computer, and telecommunications services, have enjoyed substantial growth. Information technology spans manufacturing, administrative, and technical workforces. This translates into an incredible feature of the information technology sector—it has the capacity to be expansive and it thereby encompasses a wide range of

services. For example, the information technology employment market is no longer restricted to providing employment opportunities to individuals with purely technical backgrounds. For every computer programmer there are likely a number of project managers, systems analysts, customer support and account managers, technical managers, sales managers, trainers, educators, and even non-IT market employees. The incredible growth and profitability of this sector has also impacted non-profit and community organizations, which have benefited greatly from the philanthropy of both information technology corporations and individuals. Microsoft Corporation is a prime example.

As noted by the National Research Council (NRC), the perception of rates of rapid growth contributes significantly to the sense of urgency that characterizes the information technology sector. In IT-intensive industries, talk of competitive pressures and the need to be continuously innovative is related to the objective to be first to market a product. Because product innovation depends absolutely on the talents of people, the information technology sector is also characterized as labor intensive. This means that the supply of well-trained and highly qualified employees is essential. During the 1990s, corporate actions such as alliances, mergers, and acquisitions created a heightened demand for information technology employees with specialized skills and work experience. In essence, this workforce laid the groundwork for the growth of the global corporations that continue to dominate the industry. Data from this period provide historical context for the current IT workforce and has remained consistent for the past decade.

In 1997 the first study was released by the Information Technology Association of America (ITAA), claiming that the nation is experiencing a significant shortage of information technology employees in large and mid-sized U.S. companies. Based on a larger sample one year later, the ITAA published another report indicating an even more serious shortage of information technology employees. Skeptics of the “projected” information technology labor shortage, such as the General Accounting Office, questioned ITAA’s methodology and provided compelling evidence that there really was no labor shortage. Organizations and individuals quickly weighed in on the debate and arguments that immediately began to surface around proposed legislation to issue H-1B visas that were awarded instantly to foreign prospective information technology employees.

By the mid 1990s, information technology companies began to hire foreign workers because of their expressed difficulty of locating well-trained and highly qualified Americans. Critics responded by claiming that the primary reason information technology companies were remotely interested in foreign talent was the financial incentives associated with foreign labor. Put simply, foreign information technology talent was believed to be less costly than domestic labor.

Although during the past few years much attention has been focused on foreign labor in the information technology sector, other sources of potentially qualified labor should not go unrecognized. It is true that empirical evidence indicates that women and minorities are severely underrepresented in information technology-related fields. In 1997, only 27 percent of U.S. computer and mathematical scientists were women. Only 4 percent were African American and 3 percent were Latino, while 12 percent were Asian American. According to the National Science Board (2000), in 1986, 36 percent of earned baccalaureate degrees in computer science went to women; a decade later, the proportion declined to 28 percent. The numbers of women earning master's degrees in computer science also declined from 30 percent in 1986 to 26 percent in 1996.

Often, science and engineering talent can be traced back to an individual's academic and recreational experiences during the elementary and middle school years. Research reported by the NRC indicates that elementary and middle school boys and girls were using computer games and the Internet in roughly equal proportions. High school males and females were also roughly equal in their use of the computer. Although high school females have increased their participation in science, only 17 percent of all students taking advanced placement courses in computer science in 1997 were female.

According to the National Science Board (2000), 33 percent of African American and Latino college freshmen anticipated majoring in science and engineering in 1998. This percentage was slightly higher than the percentage of white students choosing these areas of study (30 percent). However, the percentage of white and Latina women anticipating majoring in science and engineering was substantially smaller. The gap between men and women was largest among white and Latino students—ten and nine-point gaps, respectively. The gap was smallest among African

American students—32 percent of females versus 34 percent of males anticipated majoring in science and engineering. More significantly, a number of education reports show a substantive decline or drop-off between freshmen's declarations of their intent to study science and engineering and the actual completion of a science or engineering degree. Underrepresented U.S.-born African Americans and Latinos are more likely not to earn science and engineering degrees within five years compared to their white counterparts. A higher proportion of these groups tend to change their majors to those in non-science and non-engineering fields.

During the 1980s and 1990s, the percentages of racial and ethnic minorities receiving baccalaureate degrees in science and engineering increased slightly. However, these numbers remain at low levels. Among U.S. minority citizens and permanent residents awarded a B.S. degree in mathematics and computer science, 10 percent were African American, 5 percent were Latino, and less than one half of 1 percent were Native American or Alaskan Native. For master's degrees, minority proportions were even lower: Fewer than 6 percent were African American, 3 percent were Latino, and 0.3 percent were Native American or Alaskan Native (National Science Board 2000). However, to gain more insight into the differences in the proportion of minorities and whites receiving college-level degrees in science and engineering, it is important to consider the role of historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) in attracting and retaining students in scientific and engineering disciplines.

First, there is empirical evidence that compares differences in the number of science and engineering graduates in HBCUs and majority institutions. According to data collected by the National Science Foundation over the past two decades, on average, HBCUs granted twice the number of degrees in computer science than did majority institutions. The National Science Foundation claims that the large number of students attending majority institutions who are attracted to and express an interest in science and engineering disciplines do not complete their degrees in such fields. Therefore, explanations for the difference in the number of science and engineering degrees granted to whites and African Americans in both types of institutions lies *not* in the academic profiles of their students—for example, those who express an interest, declare a major, or earn a degree in science and engineering—but rather

in the ways in which the *institutions* attract and retain students in these disciplines.

To understand what HBCUs might be doing differently to attract and retain minority students in science and engineering, it is useful to consider the “pipeline model” and how it affects students’ demonstration of scientific knowledge. According to the NRC, when implementing the pipeline model in majority institutions, students permeate certain barriers designed to filter out those who are incapable of attaining the next levels of scientific knowledge. Those students who remain are expected to enter and “fit” into the scientific and technical professions.

The model employed in the HBCU is quite different. Instead of placing an emphasis on “filtering” students, the HBCU model stresses *inclusion* or pooling of students. Extensive outreach, mentoring, and support are key elements. Creating a supportive environment within the institution, as well as among peers, results in students not fending for themselves, but when expressing academic difficulties, being offered intellectual, emotional, and academic support. Also, studies indicate that the HBCU model is effective in attracting and retaining women in science and engineering majors, especially the mentoring component.

For those earning college and university degrees in a science or engineering discipline, as is the case for most majors, upon graduation, employment opportunities are desired. The information technology labor force looks favorable. The US Department of Commerce has a forecast of the 30 fastest growing professional occupations between 2008 and 2018. The second fastest growing jobs are Network Systems and Data Communications Analyst, projected to grow at 53.4 percent. Also included in the top 25 fastest growing jobs are Computer Engineers for Application at 34 percent growth and Systems Software at 30.4 percent growth.

Clearly, the nation’s imperative to strengthen its technological workforce and its scientific talent pool has profound implications when considering the underrepresentation of women and minorities. This has been described as a *serious* issue by the nation’s leading researchers and business and education leaders. The National Science Foundation has recently adopted this issue as a priority, placing special emphasis on the underrepresentation of women and minorities in the information technology workforce.

Having a grasp of the future of the nation's information technology workforce is important. Data collected on the number of women and minorities in the technology workforce suggest that African Americans, Latinos, and women are an entire pool of talent that remains untapped. Professionals in information technology industries reflect neither the demographics of today's population nor those projected in the future. According to the NRC's report *Building a Workforce for the Information Economy*, the information technology workforce is predominantly white, male, young, and educated. Although this workforce is becoming more diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, and nation of birth, it is less so with regard to gender.

In 2009, whites dominated the information technology workforce by representing 72.6 percent of all workers. Asian and Pacific Islanders represented 17 percent, whereas African Americans represented 6.1 percent, and Latinos represented 5 percent. No data is available for Native Americans during 2009.

It is clear that the information technology workforce is overwhelmingly male. 75 percent of the workforce in 2009 was male. Although the majority of the information technology workforce is US-born, the proportion of foreign-born individuals rose from 13 percent in 1995 to 22 percent in 2009. By comparison, all foreign-born workers constitute about 10 percent of employees in the United States. In terms of educational levels, about two-thirds of the information technology workforce between 1995 and 1999 had at least a bachelor's degree, compared to about one-third of all employed individuals, and three-fourths of all employed in professional specialty occupations in the United States.

Research Study

By applying appropriate organization-environment perspectives, the intention of my research is to investigate why and how information technology corporations adopt diversity strategies geared toward women and minorities. Three and a half years of collecting empirical and interview data is sufficient time in which to document some of the perceptions, challenges, and frustrations experienced by corporations as they establish and implement diversity strategies. These experiences are circumscribed by economic,

political, and social forces and pressures. Focusing on corporate policies, practices, activities, and behaviors, rather than on women and minority perceptions of diversity strategies, seems to be the best way to draw attention to the particularities of why and how corporations do diversity.

My primary thesis is that information technology corporations adopt diversity strategies because of interpretation of interorganizational ties, legal mandates and political pressures, human resources professionals, and internal, formal labor market practices. To test my thesis, I gathered data from a mail survey questionnaire sent to a randomly selected group of one hundred information technology corporations. Information was also generated from a select group of eighty human resources professionals. Interview subjects were individuals employed in the one hundred corporations participating in the mail survey questionnaire (See Research Method). In order to gain a better understanding of organization features that characterized participating information technology corporations, survey data indicate a general profile of corporations in terms of employee racial and gender composition, company size, age, location, revenue volume, and industry type by the presence of diversity strategies (see Appendix A for a complete listing of corporations and profiles of participating corporations).

My survey questionnaire focused on corporations' experiences with recruitment, hiring, and retention activities targeting U.S.-born women and minorities, namely African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans. It was necessary to create questions that would encourage corporations to begin and continue to the end. In this regard, questions were presented in an order of sequence to ensure a sense of logic and clear understanding of the purpose of the study. To provide consistency throughout the questionnaire, the format of closed-ended questions with ordered-answer choices was employed to address anticipated time constraints of informants. Dillman (2001) suggests that this format can yield concise, usable, and cost-effective responses. A few open-ended important questions were included in the questionnaire, such as "What is your company's statement on diversity?" and "What is your company's age?"

After pre-testing the survey questionnaire several times, it was mailed out to a random sample of information technology intensive corporations across the United States. Three waves of mailings yielded a total of one hundred completed, usable survey questionnaires. Survey data analyses

were straightforward. Simple descriptive statistics were employed to describe the relevant characteristics and compare important factors associated with the adoption of diversity strategies. Because my emphasis was on predictors of the adoption of diversity strategies, multivariate regression analyses were employed. The overall goal of both descriptive and multivariate analyses was to determine the structure and behavior of corporations that adopt diversity strategies.

The survey questionnaire method was supplemented by in-depth, semi-structured interviews. I employed two interview techniques. They were the key informant and narrative methods. Kahn and Cannell (1957, 57) describe in-depth interviewing as “a conversation with a purpose.” Data generated from key informant interviews and narratives offered a clearer and better understanding of the questionnaire data. Themes and patterns that emerged from interviews were relevant to my research questions and hypotheses. In fact, results from the survey questionnaire alone could not have been interpreted easily or have provided rich explanations. Indeed, interview data were necessary to meet the goal and objectives of my research.

I conducted and structured interviews in terms of the research objective—to investigate why and how information technology corporations adopt diversity strategies. As argued by Whyte (1984), the nature and structure of the key informant interview is not fixed by predetermined questions, but rather is designed to provide the respondent with the freedom to introduce materials or information that were not anticipated by the interviewer. Because many interview subjects in my study were employed in positions characterized by excessive work loads and tight schedules, it was necessary to develop a set of very broad, semi-structured questions that would ultimately address time constraints yet yield the best possible information.

The key informant interview method rests on the assumption that in order to understand the *shaping* of individuals' attitudes, we must probe for reports of experiences. Moreover, the first step toward this objective is to describe the *events* the subject has experienced that are most relevant to one's study. When the interview is focused on events as revealed by the informant, Whyte argues that we can gain a better understanding of informant attitudes if we link them with the events experienced.

Because my research focus is on corporate structures and behaviors and not on the human resources professional specifically, I chose a rather informal sampling approach for interview subjects. The process of selecting human resources professionals was based on convenience. As prospective interview subjects, I chose human resources professionals who offered further assistance toward the completion of my research. Individuals who wrote encouraging notes and attached business cards to the returned survey questionnaire were considered as potential interview subjects. Human resources professionals who established contact by telephone or electronic mail to inform me that they were in the midst of completing the questionnaire or to request additional time were also identified as potential key informants. Finally, I considered human resources professionals employed by the top-ranked information corporations in the U.S. and abroad. These interview subjects were of particular interest given their corporation's high visibility and large employee size. In any case, these criteria were convenient given that the survey questionnaire sampling procedure provided no contact names.

Interview subjects held the job titles of vice president, senior manager, regional or district manager, director, and senior consultant. They were located in and reported usually to one or two divisions within the corporation—human resources management and legal areas. In some cases, interview subjects were located in the Office for Diversity, considered to be its own department in the corporation. Surprisingly, after a week or so of receipt of the letter of invitation to participate in my study, the vast majority of subjects agreed to provide an interview. In general, they were college-educated and middle-aged and, on average, had been employed in the human resources profession for fifteen to twenty years. Subjects' average age was forty-six at the time of the interviews. Nearly half of the interview subjects were women and one-fifth identified as an ethnic minority. At the time of the interviews, two-thirds of the subjects were employed in a Fortune 500 corporation. In terms of U.S. regional location, the majority of subjects were located in the corporation's headquarters or primary site. Interview subjects were employed in corporations spanning thirty to one hundred nine years in operation. Industry types embraced three broad areas of information technology—manufacturing, software development and programming, and telephone and communications services.

Once my interview subjects understood the goals of my research, they were quite generous with their time and even welcomed the opportunity to provide their insights and experiences as key players in their corporations. On average, interviews were ninety minutes long but no shorter than fifty minutes. In fact, I found that the majority of the interview responses were quite honest and sought to illuminate many of the challenges and difficulties associated with the pathways and barriers to attracting and retaining women and minority talent.

Many interview subjects seized the opportunity to provide clarification and interpretation of misunderstood popular notions of “diversity” behaviors in corporate America. In each interview, I paid close attention to common and different themes as subjects told of their experiences in working with corporate leadership, colleagues in their departments, and external organizations such as colleges and universities. By sharing their experiences and perspectives on why and how diversity behaviors exist or fail to exist in their company, different events and occurrences came together. I found that the key informant method triggered reflection in many of the interview subjects and was of great value.

On an interesting note, many of my peers cautioned that members of the business community, especially those in large corporations, may be less inclined to participate in the interview process because of their busy schedules. Also, it was suspected that prospective interviewees, given their key positions within the company, might be consumed with serious work challenges and responsibilities associated with major lay-offs and hiring freezes influenced by the nation’s economic recession. Of major concern, my peers predicted that given the focus of my research, much of the interview data would resemble what they called public relations or “PR spill.” They asserted that my interviews more than likely would yield public opinion and attitudes about diversity rather than the corporation’s honest views and practices concerning diversity. After all, the PR spill’s primary concern is creating and maintaining a positive image through effective communications. I found just the opposite.

Data generated from both key informant and narrative interviews were used to relate practice to theory (the reality of social phenomena). In this context, descriptive data were summarized then linked to more general theoretical constructs presented throughout this book. As a method

of illustration, interview data were employed in my research to build upon theory by drawing on substantive data generated from human resources professionals located in America's leading information technology corporations.

Both survey and interview data provide important knowledge and information concerning corporations' structures and behaviors associated with the recruitment, hiring, and retention of women and minorities. As such, these data offer a broader view and understanding of the influence of the environment on corporations' decision making and strategic choices. Although quite powerful, resourceful, and resilient, corporations, too, are impacted by social forces. My research shows how over the last few decades, significant change has occurred in the life span of the corporation that ultimately impacts their interests and motivation to adopt and implement diversity strategies.

Themes of Analyses

Chapter 2 begins by placing corporate diversity strategies in a socio-historical context by examining the history and legacy of civil rights in America and its impact on the creation and implementation of equal employment laws and practices. This chapter focuses on changes in political action over time, political-economic structures, and dominant ideologies that give shape to these changes. Chapter 2 then shifts to the role of corporations in reinventing equal employment opportunity practices such as Affirmative Action programs into diversity structures and behaviors. A look at empirical research on the impact of diversity on organization performance provides an understanding of the relevance of diversity initiatives in work organizations. This chapter further points to the complexities that underlie diversity strategies that address inequality and inclusion in the workplace.

Corporations' insistence on the difficulty in hiring women and minority scientists and engineers sets the stage for Chapter 3. Identifying specific challenges and conditions that plague corporations in their pursuit of talent allows for an in-depth exploration of commonly held beliefs about a massive labor shortage in the information-technology sector. This chapter also suggests that there are certain industry types more prone to experience

difficulty in hiring women and minorities. In addition to a description of common barriers and challenges to entry into the information-technology sector, a discussion of alternative strategies to hiring women and minorities is provided. Chapter 3 also deals with the issue of outsourcing, in the context of hiring foreign workers as a threat to hiring U.S.-born women and minority talent. As a significant way of averting barriers to entry, this chapter discusses the role of diversity strategies in hiring well-trained and highly qualified women and minority talent.

Chapter 4 is about corporations' perceptions of legal mandates, court judgments, and political pressures to adopt and implement diversity strategies. Corporations' attitudes toward the importance of the relationship between Affirmative Action, Equal Employment Opportunity, and diversity are explored. Are Affirmative Action practices the same as implementing diversity strategies? Do diversity strategies go well beyond Affirmative Action practices?

The argument that corporations implement diversity strategies because of past injustices and inequality is also discussed in Chapter 4. The contention that corporations implement diversity strategies as a means of reducing vulnerability to and risk of legal sanctions and accusations of discrimination implies that diversity structures and behaviors serve as defenders of the corporation. This chapter also offers an extensive discussion on the role and impact of H-1B visas on securing information technology professionals as it relates to the recruitment and hiring of women and minority talent.

Chapter 5 takes a look at the relationship between corporations and women and minority organizations. Recently, establishing and maintaining relationships with historically black colleges and universities and women and minority science and engineering associations have proven ineffective in recruiting and hiring women and minority talent. In fact, HBCUs are becoming less and less important as a primary supplier of women and minority talent. This chapter claims that many women and minority organizations' primary function with corporations is to serve as recipients of financial contributions and sponsorships. However, the tide has shifted. Corporations are seeking out alternative ways of recruiting women and minorities. No longer are HBCUs the leading vehicle for securing a diverse workplace.

CHAPTER 2

Legal and Political History of Diversity

What strange bedfellows: civil rights, affirmative action, reverse discrimination and diversity! Did they ever have anything to do with each other?

—Youlanda Gibbons, Professor of Sociology
and Liberal Studies, Georgetown University;
Diversity and Inclusion Consultant, NASA

Yesterday did mean something! To understand the connections between diversity, markets, legal mandates, and corporations, one must consider the great political and social transformation that forced corporations to realize that a diverse workforce would be good for business. A grasp of the significance of diversity in organizations begins with the civil rights movement and the emergence of diversity ideology in American businesses.

The legal and legislative “hammer” approach is marked by the nation’s experiences of peril and persistence to achieve workplace equality. However, changing conventional wisdom that the “hammer” approach fails to achieve economic success has led American corporations to create opportunity structures that employ a softer, gentler “velvet glove” approach, emphasizing strategy rather than compliance. Sociologist Frederick Lynch’s 1997 seminal work *The Diversity Machine* characterizes diversity in American corporations. It provides an analysis of how diversity ideology has surfaced in two directions: first, as manifested as internal tensions between certain groups, such as those who promote diversity as a continuance of the civil rights movement; and second, as represented by those who view diversity as a good business strategy that ultimately improves the corporation’s

bottom line. Diversity, be it viewed as a newly improved version of American civil rights or a set of innovative and competitive business practices, has manifested itself in organizational practices and behaviors.

Although there is no definitive number on how many U.S. corporations have developed and implemented diversity strategies, researchers estimate the number at more than 70 percent (Winterle 1992; SHRM 1995; Wheeler 1995; Mueller 1996). Common among these initiatives are the creation of diversity action plans, the endorsements of diversity in mission statements from senior level management, the implementation of diversity training programs, and the establishment of diversity task force groups and councils. Providing the breath of life to these diversity initiatives are powerful constituents such as chief executive officers, presidents and chancellors of colleges and universities, nonprofit organizations, government agencies, research institutions, and philanthropic organizations, including public and private foundations.

The persistence of organizational behaviors grappling with diversity is due, at least in part, to the way in which it is linked to the notion of morality and corporate responsibility. The United States discrimination laws imply a strong sense of a moral imperative to right the wrongs of society. This is demonstrated mostly in corporations' aims to persistently correct past racial and ethnic injustices, in particular. These efforts are most noticeable in their mission statements, official reports, and formal documents. In most cases, these statements use the word "diversity" and tend to attach the principles of equality, nondiscrimination, fairness, and justice. Here are some examples:

- **General Motors.** "Many people, one GM, Now. At GM, we are striving to create and maintain an environment that naturally enables the people of General Motors, its unions, suppliers, and dealers to fully contribute and achieve personal fulfillment in the pursuit of total customer enthusiasm."

Official GM Statement on Diversity

- **Exxon Mobil.** "We strive to attract the *best* talent available to meet our business requirements. As a result, we have built

a diverse worldwide workforce with a common focus on attaining superior business results. We must continue to foster an environment that values the wide range of perspectives inherent in our diverse workforce, encourages individual growth and achievement, and rewards employees based on their performance and contribution to the realization of business objectives. This cannot be accomplished aggressively. It requires the active, ongoing commitment of all Exxon Mobil employees. Only when every employee feels fully valued and fully utilized, will we achieve our competitive potential. Maintaining our position as the world's premier petroleum and petrochemical company depends on our steadfast commitment to this endeavor.”

Lee R. Raymond, Chairman and CEO

- **General Electric.** “I want to make sure GE is always the employer of choice. This has got to be a place where the best people want to come to work and where they want to stay and they come here because we do leading edge work. We allow people to live their dreams in an open and fair, diverse environment. We treat everybody with respect; the best get paid like the best in a performance culture. If having a meritocracy is incredibly important to your culture and what you believe in, diversity is the manifestation that says that everybody, no matter what their background, can excel in this company and so I just believe within my soul that diversity is incredibly important.”

Jeff Immelt, Chairman and CEO

- **International Business Machines (IBM) Corporation.** “... to provide equal opportunity and affirmative action for applicants and employees, IBM carries out programs on behalf of women, minorities, people with disabilities, Vietnam-era veterans, Special Disabled Veterans [...] this includes outreach as well as human resources programs that ensure equity in compensation and opportunity for growth and development

[...] managers are expected to ensure a work environment free of all forms of discrimination and harassment.”

Official IBM Statement on Diversity

- **AT&T Corporation.** “As a global company touching diverse customers and markets wherever we do business, AT&T values individual perspectives. We recognize that it is just and right to treat every human being and their culture with decency and respect. First and foremost of Our Common Bond values is ‘respect for individuals.’ It is the foundation of our other values—helping customers, adhering to the highest standards of integrity, innovation and teamwork—and central to leveraging the dimensions of diversity.”

Official AT&T Statement on Diversity

- **United States Postal Services.** “The Postal Services requires new thinking and new structures that regards Diversity Development as fundamental to business success to achieve our corporate strategic goals. Diversity is that which makes each of us unique. It can be our birthplace, education, age, gender, neighborhood, race, social class, economic status, values, skills, appearance, lifestyle, etc. Valuing diversity is accepting and appreciating people’s uniqueness. Developing diversity involves building tools and nurturing a culture that fully understands uniqueness and talent to support other organization goals.”

Robert Harris, VP of Diversity

- **Merrill Lynch Corporation.** “Merrill Lynch is committed to ensuring that diversity thrives at every level and at every location of our company. In the words of Chairman and Chief Executive Officer David H. Komansky, ‘We must constantly work to create an environment at Merrill Lynch where a diversity of cultures, people, and ideas provide a catalyst for professional and personal achievement.’ As Merrill Lynch has successfully reinvented itself over the years—from a U.S.-based

retail securities broker to a diversified global financial services company—our workforce diversity efforts have evolved as well. Our focus on race and gender issues that has driven our program and policies since we began our diversity initiatives in the United States in 1992 has broadened to include a global perspective. In one of our five guiding principles—Respect for the Individual—our diversity imperative is to create a corporate environment that promotes mutual respect, acceptance, cooperation, and productivity among people from varying backgrounds. To achieve this, we are working to weave our policies into the very fabric of Merrill Lynch—at every level, across every business unit, and in all our business.”

Official Merrill Lynch Statement on Diversity

Often referring to the racial and gender composition of an organization, diversity brings with it a complexity of political, legal, cultural, moral, and social issues. For the most part, diversity in an organizational context is influenced greatly by external factors, including projections of changes in workplace demographics, the demonstrated and visible commitment of senior management, legal mandates and regulatory pressures, vulnerability and risk of discrimination and sexual harassment lawsuits, and the heightened awareness of corporate responsibility. In these cases, an organization’s motivation for adopting and implementing diversity strategies is a matter of historical reference and pressure from powerful social forces. Of equal importance is what is frequently cited as the business case of diversity. Put another way, the corporation’s bottom line—its profits. However, what is central to these explanations is something much more fundamental—that which drives the corporation to adopt diversity-related strategies is their understanding of the history of race relations and gender politics in American society. This is an important place to begin. This history commences with the administration of civil rights laws and their application to corporate America.

Civil Rights Legislation in the 1960s and 1970s

Lynch (2001) provides an exceptional chronology of the political and legal history of diversity in the United States. The focus here is an understanding

of how certain events contributed to the emergence and adoption of diversity behaviors in American corporations. From 1961, when President John F. Kennedy created the Presidential Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity, to 1990, when the Americans with Disabilities Act was enacted, the United States has implemented laws against the discrimination of historically oppressed groups—women, minorities, and people with disabilities. Over the past forty years, the nation has seen the passage of the Equal Pay Act of 1963, the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the Age Discrimination Act of 1976, and the Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978.

This time period also bore the passage of the Equal Employment Opportunity Act (EEO) and President Kennedy's Executive Order No. 10925, later reaffirmed by President Lyndon Johnson's Executive Order No. 11246, commonly known as Affirmative Action (AA). Although most corporations use the terms Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action interchangeably, there is an important difference. The Equal Employment Opportunity law states that discrimination is illegal and organizations shall *not* discriminate. Conversely, Affirmative Action directives dictate remedies or resolutions for named groups, indicating that organizations shall compensate for past discrimination and injustices.

Civil rights legislation of the 1960s sought to eliminate discrimination and racism by simply making illegal discrimination practices and behaviors within work organizations. Originating in the civil rights movement of the 1960s, Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act prohibited employers from discriminating on the basis of sex, race, national origin, or religion. In response to this law, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) was created to investigate allegations or charges of workplace discrimination and solve such disputes through administrative action in federal court.

During the late 1960s, addressing and elaborating on enforcement rules of Title VII and Affirmative Action, the United States Department of Labor targeted federal contractors. This group was directed to implement "affirmative action" for one reason—to correct past injustices and discrimination. At first, the actual meaning of affirmative action was quite vague and required business and industry to make a "reasonable" effort to create a more diverse workforce. But later, this directive, as interpreted and implemented by corporate managers, would seek to remedy the

proportional imbalances between federal contractors' workforce composition and that of the general population labor pools. Hence, goals and timetable formulas, often referred to today as "quotas," were established to ensure that certain groups, that is, women and minorities, were not underused. In order to minimize the risk of court judgments or negative legal consequences, many employers began to adopt voluntary affirmative action plans to address the proportional racial and gender imbalances in the workplace (Lynch 1997). Not surprisingly, corporations used Affirmative Action principles and sentiments for their own self-interests, acting on an obligation to their shareholders. To reduce the possibility of lawsuits or boycotts or to capitalize on untapped human resources, the American corporation will use important aspects of the social and political environment to survive. In fact, it is dependent upon them to do so.

When I think about the 1960s and early 1970s, I remember what I've learned about these times (I was born in 1968). They were characterized by urban unrest, racial riots, and the emergence of militant and black power movements such as the Black Panthers. These protests forced corporations to recognize the consumer and labor powers held by organized groups of minorities and address the stark reality of a racially divided workforce. Ultimately, such social unrest added to the necessity of implementing Affirmative Action for the inclusion of minorities in the national workforce. As a method of forestalling racial conflict and tension, the nation's political and economic elites would begin the widespread implementation of Affirmative Action, thus making it a part of the day-to-day operations in the American workplace. In essence, the nation's key political players wanted peace.

Infrequently acknowledged, the role of Affirmative Action in ensuring and advancing equality in the workplace is credited to President Richard Nixon, not President John Kennedy. It was during the Nixon administration that equal employment laws gained much substance and momentum. Although Equal Employment Opportunity laws existed, during the early 1970s many corporations failed to continue to implement policies or programs to address discriminatory hiring practices. It was during this time that Nixon's Department of Justice began to establish stringent enforcement measures by directing the EEOC to bring lawsuits against corporations that were not incorporating antidiscrimination practices into their business structures and behaviors. Over the next several years, the

EEOC would take many of the nation's largest corporations to court. AT&T, General Motors, and Sears were among them.

By 1975, nearly every major U.S. corporation had established an Equal Employment Opportunity compliance office, they had hired an Equal Employment Opportunity compliance officer, and some corporations established special positions to promote and hire minorities only (Thomas 1999). By the late 1970s, the EEOC began to shield employers implementing voluntary Affirmative Action programs from reverse discrimination allegations and complaints.

Over the next decade the U.S. Supreme Court would transform Affirmative Action. The *Griggs v. Duke Power* case specifically forced corporations to address "diversity" from a business perspective. Thirteen black men at the Duke Power Company who were required to pass a high school equivalency test to be considered for promotions filed a lawsuit that would take them all the way to the Supreme Court. The court unanimously ruled that business could not test applicants for jobs or promotions in a way that restricted opportunities for blacks. In their opinion, the court contended that employees are required to pass tests related to their actual job qualifications. Not surprisingly, in the aftermath of *Griggs*, many corporations eliminated general aptitude tests and others compared test scores with individuals of the same race (Wood 2003).

In June 1979, the Supreme Court continued to weigh in on the issue of race and employment in the *Weber v. Kaiser Aluminum & Chemical Corporation and United Steelworkers of America* case. Brian Weber, a white worker at the Louisiana factory at Kaiser Aluminum, sued the corporation because he claimed that he had been passed over for promotion due to the company's Affirmative Action practices. By a ruling of 5-2, the court established a company's right to use voluntary Affirmative Action programs that excluded white males. This ruling gave corporations the constitutional right to use racial preferences and quotas in hiring in order to overcome imbalances in the workplace, even if the corporation had not demonstrated a history of racial discrimination. Little did Weber know that his case would trigger a watershed of allegations of reverse discrimination in the courts over the next three decades.

In the 1977 case *Fullilove v. Klutznick*, the Supreme Court ruled 6-4 that Congress acted constitutionally in setting aside 10 percent of government

contracts for minority-owned businesses involving a \$4 billion public works program. However, most scholars agree that the political winds of Affirmative Action began to shift as the Reagan administration blew through Washington and overhauled each branch of government. In 1983, the court considered a case brought by a group of white police officers and firefighters that challenged the constitutionality of a lower court order that favored blacks and Latinos in the case of layoffs. With a 6-3 margin in *Firefighters Local Union No. 1784 v. Stotts*, the higher court ruled in favor of the firefighters, contending that the lower court exceeded its power when it required that white employees be laid off in a seniority system where blacks possessed less seniority. Although recognized as a small victory, *Firefighters Local Union No. 1784 v. Stotts* alerted the business community that the Reagan administration was not a friend to Affirmative Action.

The Transformation of Affirmative Action

During the Reagan-Bush administrations, the Republican Party paved the way for the opponents of “racial and gender preferences.” Considered a worthy debate, the political majority opposed racial and gender preferences in any format, especially Affirmative Action. Opposition to Affirmative Action was a national platform agenda item for a decade. In 1985, Attorney General Edwin Meese put forth the motion to rewrite Executive Order 11246, the source of Affirmative Action programs, and make goals and timetables voluntary and not mandated under U.S. law (Lynch 1997). However, Meese met with great opposition.

Not only were civil rights advocates up in arms, but the business community was as well. Corporations asserted that Affirmative Action goals and timetables were good for the bottom line. This political retreat from Affirmative Action goals would tarnish the relationship between the administration and major corporations. In response to such strong opposition, the Reagan administration conducted a survey of one hundred twenty-seven large corporations. They were asked if they were planning to continue to use numerical objectives to track the progress of women and minorities in their corporation *regardless* of government mandates. Ninety-five percent of the corporations surveyed indicated “yes.” Given the influence and lobbying power of the almighty corporation, in 1986

and 1987, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld forms of “quotas” as established by the U.S. Department of Labor.

When examining the proportions of political appointments by race and gender, George H. W. Bush has been praised for including a historical number of women and minorities in his administration. However, history shows that most crucial and fierce attacks on Affirmative Action occurred during the same period. Signing the 1991 Civil Rights Act in the midst of the Clarence Thomas hearing and refusing to sign a directive by C. Boyden Gray to eliminate racial preferences in federal employment raised great concern for civil rights advocates. In fact, many would agree that these two actions fueled yet again the nation’s preoccupation with race and gender in the workplace. It was during the 1990s that many conservative Americans assumed that Affirmative Action programs no longer embodied the early ideals of color-blind nondiscrimination. Rather, the strong belief that Affirmative Action represented blatant gender and racial proportionalism and reverse discrimination would resound throughout all levels of most work organizations (Lynch 1997).

The Backlash of Affirmative Action

Nearly twenty-five years after the initial implementation of Affirmative Action practices in the corporate sector, many Americans believed that the time had come to put an end to such efforts. However, it was difficult to find opponents of Affirmative Action arguing *against* diversity and inclusion. Sociologist Nathan Glazer published in 1975 the first book in opposition to Affirmative Action, *Affirmative Discrimination: Ethnic Identity and Public Policy*. This work proposes that Affirmative Action practices are a form of discrimination against white males and as a result are a barrier to fairness and equality in the promotion and hiring processes for white males. Glazer suggests that minorities who are less qualified than white males are circumventing better-qualified whites for jobs. These assertions would mark the beginning of much criticism to come during the 1980s and 1990s.

Immersed in great ambivalence and criticism, Affirmative Action opponents sprang up by leaps and bounds throughout the 1990s. A wealth of widely cited works such as books and articles attacked the principles and

spirit of Affirmative Action programs. Authors such as Charles Murray, Frederick Lynch, and William Beer claimed that Affirmative Action unfairly denied equal opportunity and gave preference to the *less* qualified by putting forth the foundations of merit, fairness, and reverse discrimination. Interestingly, a few distinguished minority authors were among the critics as well. Thomas Sowell, Shelby Steele, Roosevelt Thomas, Linda Chavez, and Clarence Thomas provided compelling arguments against Affirmative Action. These authors claimed that Affirmative Action placed an unfair burden on minorities, de-emphasizing their achievements and accomplishments. They agreed that Affirmative Action failed to improve the quality of life for the masses of minorities still living in poverty.

The contentious debate concerning Affirmative Action tends to center on the effects of its programs. For example, Roosevelt Thomas argues that Affirmative Action's achievements have been "stupendous," whereas A. W. Blumrosen maintains that neither supporters nor opponents give nondiscrimination laws much credit for their effectiveness. Nonetheless, in general, there is a wealth of inconsistent findings on the impact of AA programs. For example, In 1991, Uri and Mixon found that between 1972 and 1980, federally enacted Affirmative Action programs had a profound impact on the increased economic mobility of African Americans. On the other hand, examining employment data between 1947 and 1988, women between the ages of twenty and fifty-four began to lose gains in employment stability between 1981 and 1988. It is important to note that these were the Reagan administration years. Likewise, Sharon Collins, in 1989, found that between 1980 and 1985, there was a reduction on the focus of EEO and Affirmative Action as defined by the responsibilities of Affirmative Action corporate executives.

Most importantly, at the center of the Affirmative Action backlash was this notion of reverse discrimination. As a concept, reverse discrimination was propositioned by leading scholars and supported by many individuals who were members of the powerful and political elite. Reverse discrimination is closely associated with the U.S. Supreme Court decision *Regents of California v. Bakke*. As mentioned earlier, this ruling held that the university could give lawful consideration to race in future admissions procedures. This ruling continues to ignite the grand debate between those who argue that Affirmative Action represents

reverse discrimination and those who argue that it does not. Over the past few years, American colleges and universities have had a defining role in the Affirmative Action controversy. In *Hopwood v. the State of Texas*, the plaintiff was denied admission to the University of Texas Law School although she alleges she was better qualified than several African American and Mexican American students who were admitted. The U.S. Court of Appeals ruled that the admissions procedure was unconstitutional given that three separate admissions councils were used to render decisions—one representing each racial group. This decision, however, did not change the ruling that race can be used as a factor in the selection and admissions procedures. However, a striking blow against Affirmative Action occurred in 1995. The Board of Regents in the State of California voted to eliminate the use of “race, gender, religion, color, ethnicity, or nationality” as criteria in its admission decisions and in hiring and contracting decisions. During this time, the California Board of Regents directed university officials to develop a policy that would “ensure that the student body remains diverse.” This was a popular example of an institution that recognized the importance of diversity, to the extent that they implemented institutional diversity-driven structures independent of federal mandates.

The next several years proved to be a battleground in the United States Supreme Court with Affirmative Action at its center. Two lawsuits would prompt the nation to rethink its position on Affirmative Action and higher education. In June 2003, the Supreme Court decided that the *Grutter v. Bollinger* case upheld the principles that underlined the *Bakke* decision. The Court upheld the University of Michigan’s Law School decision to use race as a factor in the admissions decisions process. Two years later, in a separate case challenging the University of Michigan’s undergraduate admissions policies, the Supreme Court continued to uphold the right of universities to consider race in admissions procedures in order to achieve a diverse student population. Given its vicious attacks, these victories were considered a victory for Affirmative Action.

Whether a positive or negative force, the ends of Affirmative Action tend to justify its means. Its practices have paved the way for organizations, especially corporations, to redirect and refocus their level of commitment to ensuring equality in the workplace. Some proponents

of Affirmative Action claim that many Americans abandoned its ideals in favor of diversity. The ideological sentiments during the Reagan-Bush years shifted the tide away from a kinder and gentler nation to a colder and less socially responsible nation. Civil rights advocates and supporters were greatly concerned that the government had essentially reversed its stance on racial inequality. At the same time, factors such as mergers, acquisitions, downsizing, and a slowing economy pushed corporate executives to develop “bottom-line justifications” for diversity. In the face of severe criticism, court battles, and the softening of government mandates such as Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action, corporate leaders sought to maintain their commitment to diversity in the workplace through its business goals and objectives.

Indeed, the backlash of Affirmative Action practices has spilled over into American corporations. This backlash has contributed to the adoption of corporate diversity strategies. In essence, the spirit of diversity grew during the decline of support for Affirmative Action throughout the United States. Broadening its reach, diversity, unlike Affirmative Action, became the *desired* choice for providing equal employment opportunity for women and minorities. The criticism of Affirmative Action made way for diversity strategies purposed to continuing to pursue and retain women and minorities without the baggage that Affirmative Action sentiments tend to bring.

Diversity as Corporate Strategy

Yet, there is another important motivator for adopting diversity strategies—the Hudson Institute’s report *Workforce 2000*. This report is perhaps one of the most commonly cited and frequently referenced concerning the need for corporations to adopt diversity strategies. *Workforce 2000* identified the changing racial and gender composition of the nation’s workforce, proclaiming that by the year 2000, 85 percent of new workers would be women and minorities. This startling statistic influenced corporate leaders’ decisions to make diversity a bottom-line issue.

As argued by Yakura (1996, 42), the assumptions that underlie diversity bring a new set of ideals that “lie uncomfortably on top of the Equal

Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action debates.” In contrast to Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action mandates, diversity assumptions differ remarkably given their emphasis on recognizing the uniqueness of individuality as opposed to homogenized equality and neutrality. The corporation’s potential to enhance performance and increase creativity among its employees justifies and is dependent on its diversity efforts. After all, competition and profit become the impetus for valuing and investing in *everyone’s* potentialities regardless of racial, class, and gender group membership.

Unlike Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action practices, in theory, Yakura states that diversity efforts are attractive and easily defensible. For example, at the individual level, the principle of diversity rests on the premise that the individual, not the group, has the opportunity to demonstrate his or her potential. In this view, the image of the white male being edged out begins to fade and is replaced by an image of a work environment where everyone can be successful, hence leading to the enhanced performance and profitability of the entire organization.

In terms of the effect of diversity on organization performance, at the time of this writing, there exist a few large-scale studies. Rosabeth Kanter’s 1984 article *The Change Masters* encompasses a large sample of organizations providing evidence that corporations with progressive human resources management have enjoyed profitability over two decades. The second study, focusing on race and gender exclusively, Heidrick and Struggles’ *The New Diversity: Women and Minorities on Corporate Boards* found that companies with two or more women or two or more minority directors on their corporate board are more likely to be listed on *Fortune* magazine’s *Most Admired Companies* list. Likewise, in 1993, the *Wall Street Journal* reported results from a study indicating that corporations that have demonstrated a good record of recruiting and retaining women and minorities have stock prices nearly 10 percent higher than corporations with poor recruitment and retention records. And, lastly, by examining the relationship between diversity and financial performance in the food industry, Hayden and colleagues in 1994 found that corporations with the best diversity programs also were the best financially performing firms.

But as is the case with Affirmative Action, critics of diversity have emerged and have become quite vocal. Many Americans claim that by focusing on diversity, with its emphasis on the individual and inclusion, the Affirmative Action debate is ignored. As suggested by Robert Jackall, diversity is interpreted as “window dressing” for the interests of white males while being perceived as serving the interests of women and minorities by perpetuating “token” inclusion. Critics of diversity advance that organizations use diversity rhetoric as a means of shielding themselves against potential discrimination lawsuits rather than as a mechanism for ensuring equal opportunity. To the extent possible, diversity’s symbolic behaviors serve as distractions from addressing the discriminatory patterns in hiring and promotion practices. In a popular article in *Black Enterprise* (July 2002), diversity is scrutinized *because* of its efforts to create an inclusive work environment. Critics argue that as African Americans become more and more of a minority among other ethnic groups, there is a need for standard, metropolitan statistical analysis. When assessing the ethnic and gender profile of a geographic location, the purpose of such analysis is to determine what the metric should be, as a template, when comparing it to the overall demographic composition of an organization. In this view, some African American leaders suggest that it is probable that diversity and inclusion efforts might *exclude* significant portions of African Americans.

Undoubtedly, there is great complexity underlying Equal Employment Opportunity, Affirmative Action, diversity, and their relationship to each other. This complexity lies in the values that we, as individuals, as groups, and as a nation, hold deeply and dear. Yet, in certain instances, the values that influence our notions of equality and fairness often lead us to reconsider and re-examine what they mean. History reminds us that at the heart of these value-based considerations are enduring racial and gender issues.

Recognizing this complexity, my research aim here is not to determine the best practice or ideological approach for addressing workplace inequality or discrimination, nor is it to investigate women’s and minorities’ perceptions of workplace discrimination. Rather it is to explore and explain those salient factors associated with diversity structures and behaviors in the corporate setting, that is, the environment and organization

influences that motivate the adoption of diversity strategies. I offer a better understanding of the conditions that drive the creation and implementation of diversity practices. I explore the challenges and pressing issues that give shape to diversity behaviors and how they change over time. This book, then, provides a sociological interpretive account of how legal mandates, population demographics, global markets, corporate responsibility, and the critical mass of women and minorities affect the presence of diversity strategies.

CHAPTER 3

Corporations and Diversity Hiring Problems: Myth or Reality?

Corporations have neither bodies to be punished, nor souls to be condemned, they therefore do as they like.

—Edward Thurlow, 1st Baron Thurlow,
British Lawyer and Tory politician and
Lord Chancellor of Great Britain

It is often argued by research scholars and practitioners that women and minorities have difficulty entering and advancing in the ranks of corporate America. Even after successful recruitment, it is no secret that corporate America is not a friendly environment for those who are not white males. Studies indicate that women and minorities are confronted with tokenism, lower pay, poor opportunities for career advancement and lack of mentoring, and often report feelings of isolation and exclusion in the firm. Women and minorities who do well in the corporation, at least in part, are considered as assimilating to company philosophy and culture. On the other hand, those who do not succeed are likely to be deemed as misfits.

Research on hiring women and minorities in the corporate sector has paid little attention to firm characteristics. In fact, when examining factors such as race and gender in work organizations, consideration is rarely given to differences in corporation size, type of industry, or geographical location. In this chapter, I examine the issues that pose barriers to hiring women and minorities. At the core of my analysis is the notion that firm

characteristics and the presence of diversity strategies, together, influence the hiring of women and minorities. Variation in hiring difficulties of these groups experienced by certain types of corporations is considerable and reflects myriad controversial and relevant recruitment and hiring issues within the nation's information technology sector. Simply put, some corporations are just better than others in recruiting and hiring women and minority talent.

Hiring in the Information Technology (IT) Sector

Not all employment sectors face the same challenges or conditions when hiring underrepresented groups. For instance, banking, insurance, medicine, and law have their own character and milieu that shape their respective histories of attracting and hiring women and minorities. Most professions and occupations vary in their efforts, practices, policies, and structures in their employment of women and minorities. This is true for the information technology sector as well. According to recent employer surveys, issues related to the information technology workforce tend to center on several factors. Because of large numbers of job vacancies, high turnover, long time periods to fill positions, and relatively low unemployment rates, the information technology sector is experiencing substantive difficulty in hiring professionals, regardless of gender and racial or ethnic background (National Research Council 2001). However, when drawing attention to women and minorities especially, I am concerned with those organizational features and individual characteristics that impact a firm's decision to hire these groups. I focus attention on how certain information technology industries experience more or less difficulty in hiring women and minorities. I explore the conditions and qualifications for entry into the corporation and discuss how women and minorities respond to such conditions. In this chapter, I also offer an explanation of how diversity strategies serve as a means of coping with and addressing difficulties associated with hiring women and minorities.

"It is a serious crisis!" "The United States has an IT worker shortage!" "Help wanted: A call for action: America faces an IT labor shortage!" A wealth of news articles, business reports, federal statistics, and editorials proclaim the news that America was facing a severe shortage of workers in the information technology sector. Researchers and employer surveys

sound the alarm that IT related job vacancies are outpacing the number of available skilled professionals. As perhaps one of the nation's most important sectors in the flattened global economy, it is no secret that for decades, the federal government has continued to put forth the claim that there is a continuously inadequate supply of highly skilled and well-trained information technology scientists and engineers.

Millions and millions of federal grant dollars are allocated each year for developing individuals for careers in math- and science-related fields such as computer science and engineering. Special summer and enrichment programs, internships, fellowships, scholarships, and the like target women and minorities to develop their skills in information technology. Since the 1970s, the nation has identified the need for an increased number of scientists and engineers and, according to a vast number of federal reports, we continue to fall short of our goals to produce an *adequate* supply of them.

One might assume that major corporations would share the same sentiment as the federal government. Large corporations would indeed be seriously threatened by a labor shortage and its impact on their ability to remain competitive, innovative, and profitable. However, despite such claims and such arduous efforts to address the inadequate supply of scientists and engineers, my research suggests the opposite. Only 34 percent of corporations have difficulty in hiring information technology professionals. Two-thirds of corporations in this study who do not experience difficulty in hiring talent claim that a faltering economy, for the most part, has reduced the current demand for new hires and forced them to implement hiring practices that minimize labor costs. During her interview, Alisha, a human resources senior vice president, expressed this sentiment in the following way:

You know, we really aren't faced with major hiring problems like we used to experience a few years ago ... it's because of our freeze on hiring. The economy's slowdown and its effect on our customers has caused us to scale back on bringing in new hires. We just don't do the same amount of recruiting or anything ... the company cannot afford to increase our labor costs, and instead we're now trying to reduce them. One way to do this is to use the talent we already have in the company.

Looking broadly across the information technology sector, attracting and hiring labor is not an issue—there appear to be no deficits. However, by industry type, difficulty in hiring professionals is concentrated in one specialty area of information technology—the *creation of software*. Sixty percent of software-intensive companies experience difficulty in hiring professionals, compared to only 23 percent of computer equipment development and testing laboratories and 25 percent of systems analyses and engineering companies. These companies are rarely impacted by changing labor needs and are typically accommodated by economic forces in the labor market. One interviewee, Bradley, a human resources senior manager, points out:

There has been so much hype about a shortage of good talent in IT. This is not exactly true. You see, the IT industry is quite broad and diverse; it includes many areas of specialization, just like medicine, for example. My company produces hardware; you know, we build the machines, we create the hardware and so forth. We're the equipment gurus of IT. We don't have any problems finding workers but my colleagues over in the software world don't share our good fortune. We, on the other hand, always have large, qualified applicant pools.

As a general rule, computer software-intensive companies tend to attract and hire professionals with knowledge of general programming languages as well as experience working with industry-specific programming languages. Job positions that require software computer scientists and engineers also require specialized skill sets and training that usually are offered in four-year colleges and universities, while other IT industries only require a specific vocational certification. By default, this narrows the candidate pool immediately. Competing with popular college majors such as English, history, political science, biology, and business, computer science and engineering majors are few. For those students remotely interested in studying computer science, rumors of its association with “nerdy geeks” and being grounded in mathematics contribute to the low numbers of declared majors. In fact, many colleges and universities do not even offer majors related to computer science or computer engineering. Given these barriers to training, those pursuing and completing degrees

in computer science and engineering constitute a relatively small prospective labor pool. Here is how one interviewee, Denise, a senior human resources manager, describes the situation:

Although we might have 500 applicants for 25 positions, we might only find a couple of handfuls of folks that really meet our qualifications. We must be highly selective and choose the best and the brightest people ... Our firm really depends on it. We look for extraordinary skill sets ... very specialized skill sets among our applicants. See, software production requires that our scientists and engineers demonstrate the capacity to learn easily and quickly. They must be flexible, too. Our corporation recruits hard for our talent. We compete, most of the time, for new hires with other companies. You know, our reputation depends on getting and keeping the best talent out there.

The nation's cry of a worker shortage in information technology tends to refer to the *computer software industry*. Federal and business reports and journals of the trade usually fail to specify the type of information technology industry. This exaggerated contention that the United States is lagging in the world's most productive growth engine does not apply to the entire information technology sector. One industry does not reflect or represent the entire sector.

My research indicates that the computer software industry's difficulty in hiring individuals stems not from a faltering economy, but from the incredible effort to find highly qualified and well-trained professionals. The computer software industry's difficulty in hiring individuals stems not from a faltering economy, but from the incredible effort to find highly-qualified and well-trained professionals. This issue has been persistent and has nothing to do with hiring costs, freezes, or a reduction in human resources. The high selectivity of computer software professionals raises the issue of *who* is qualified and meets the conditions under which the corporation is seeking new talent. We will discuss this matter in more detail later in this chapter.

One might think that attracting and hiring new talent would not be a problem for Microsoft or IBM. These corporations are highly visible and high-ranking in their area of specialization and tend to have a longstanding

favorable reputation among their employees. Young computer science and engineering graduates from competitive colleges and universities dream of working for large and competitive firms. Large and globally competitive corporations select, motivate, and guide students who are interested in joining their organizations. Their aggressive recruitment strategies include their presence at college job fairs and their affiliations and substantive ties with campus career services. Therefore it might be safe to assume that most large and highly visible corporations are successful at attracting and hiring new talent. This is not exactly the case. In fact, smaller companies are only *slightly* more likely to experience difficulty in hiring new talent compared to large corporations. Large and highly visible corporations, regardless of their recruitment efforts, face challenges when attempting to attract and hire new talent. The selection feature of hiring individuals may be impacted by a small selection pool, an inadequate selection pool, or perhaps both. Nonetheless, what is worth noting here is that large and desired employers are not invulnerable to hiring difficulties.

The preeminence of the great American corporation has been undermined not only by foreign competition but also by the entrepreneurial surge within the United States (Kanter 1977). This cannot apply more significantly to the high technology sector, which has presented a new and compelling alternative model of business success. Stories about overnight success resulting in billions of dollars are no longer unusual to hear in the boardroom. Small companies' success, primarily based on teamwork and innovation, has caused large corporations to adopt similar strategies and behaviors. The steady stream of change igniting in the 1980s and reaching its peak in the 1990s loosened structures and blurred boundaries in America's corporations. The information technology sector is a good example of this steady change and its impact on women and minorities.

The Supply of Women, Minority IT Talent

Over the past decade, the information technology sector has emerged as a leader on issues of workplace diversity. Consistent attention to diversity has been motivated by pressing industry concerns to remain globally competitive, innovative, and highly productive. In essence, during

this period, the bottom line was the driving force for diversity and hence *required* the participation of individuals from its broadest possible talent pool. Corporations assert that attracting, developing, and retaining talent, *all* talent, are the key to sustaining and bolstering economic growth in the United States. In this view, diversity is a necessity and a benefit to the firm. However, I have found that efforts to create a more heterogeneous workplace are usually fraught with frustration and nuance.

Nearly 60 percent of corporations find it a daunting challenge to successfully recruit women and minorities. In fact, certain industries find it especially difficult. For example, computer equipment development firms, testing laboratories, and software development and programming companies experience the greatest difficulty in hiring women and minorities. These knowledge-intensive industries focus on research, testing, and software production. As such, they tend to impose more stringent hiring requirements controlled by an external environment, that is, formal education and professional training. By industry standards, these requirements are geared toward the exclusion of many women and minorities while, in turn, reflecting the traditional education and work experiences of males and non-minorities.

Not surprisingly, smaller corporations experience slightly more difficulty hiring women and minorities than do large ones. Given that large companies are typically more highly visible and generate higher revenue, chances are greatest that women and minorities are attracted and dedicated to firms where they can “retire well” and “be taken care of for life.” Of equal importance is the “diversity seal of approval.” Most women and minorities seek out the corporation that has earned the “Best Employer for Diversity Award.” Translated, this means a better chance for career opportunities and advancement. These company behaviors are generally associated with large and older corporations.

Expectedly, some corporations, because of their geographic locale, experience greater difficulty in hiring women and minorities. The vast majority of corporations in the northeastern and western regions of the United States have trouble hiring women and minorities. Historically, these regions have occupied the lion’s share of the information-technology labor force. However, most recent employment reports indicate that demand in the West for information technology professionals has steadily

declined over the past decade, whereas there appears to be a resurgence of demand in the Northeast. Therefore, if demand is *low* in certain parts of the country, then it is evident that hiring, in general, would be minimal.

Prior to the 1980s, white males dominated their homogeneous careers as computer scientists and engineers. These professionals entered from preferred undergraduate programs at select colleges and universities as well as from specialized technical programs. These practices restricted women and minorities (with the exception of many Asians) who did not fit the white male model, often expressed as “one who fits the corporate culture.” But the most commonly held belief concerning the low number of women and minorities is the notion that there exists a *small applicant pool*. It is the inadequate number of women and minority applicants that results in difficulty in hiring rather than the assumption that many women and minorities do not fit the corporate model. Instead, what is believed is that if more of them would apply, then more of them would be hired. During her interview, Alisha, a Human Resources Vice President located on the west coast, states:

Well, it's difficult in a way that the [female and minority] pool is small. The candidate pool is very, very small and there are very many companies that are in competition to find the same skills of those individuals. That's what's so difficult—if there were a large pool it wouldn't be so difficult. As of now, we simply don't have enough of these individuals applying for jobs here. I think that there are not enough of them out there.

Understanding more fully the variation that exists among corporations that impacts the hiring of women and minorities, we can then choose more appropriate policies and programs to improve the quality of work life and promote equal employment opportunity. Understanding guides action. And action on women and minority issues may be critically important for the future of American society as a whole.

So far, this chapter has argued that women and minorities are in short supply. But in the IT sector, any warm body just won't do. Attention must be paid to the skill set and specialized ability of job candidates to do technical work. Prospective employees experience an arduous application

process. It is difficult to get individuals to submit to it. Let me offer a short narrative from my study that highlights the criteria for selection from the perspective of a young, recent graduate who received a B.S. degree in computer systems engineering.

Marianna's resume was quite competitive. Having graduated from college only two years ago, she had already gained valuable work experience as a systems engineer at one of the nation's top software-development companies. She had decided that it was time to move to the big city. She wanted to relocate to a less remote area of the country. So, she submitted her resume to the nation's top-ranking software development company and was called in for an interview.

Four men—three Asian and one white—were responsible for screening Marianna's qualifications for the junior software engineer position. The interviewers made it clear that as a junior software engineer, Marianna would be responsible for assisting with, and even leading at times, the development of applications and Web services for the company's open billing platform. Currently, the division's platform consisted of seven Web services built on the WebLogic BEA platform and four services built on Tomcat with an Apache wrapper. Marianna's skills would be challenged by her ability to address shortcomings in existing technology and identify alternative forms in live production environments. Using technology such as SCRUM agile development models, developing and using testable codes, and being expected to come up with creative "out of the box" coding styles, Marianna's ability and willingness to be a team player would also be paramount. In addition, working with lead architects as well as other senior systems engineers was a requirement for this position.

Indeed, Marianna's employer of choice has no problem attracting job candidates. They are the best at what they do. However, it is unknown outside of the corporation how many inquiries culminate in completed applications. In other words, it is impossible to gauge just who is turned away from this company prior to completing their application and interview. Therefore, the company's ongoing claim that the qualified applicant pool is too small is questionable. The majority of technical job positions in Marianna's company require formal education, work experience, and ongoing training. It is rumored throughout this company that only two

percent of those who inquire about positions are actually hired. Marianna was one of them.

As discussed in the scenario, research on and development of new technologies and products require a relatively high level of proficiency in technical knowledge and specialized skill sets *prior* to entry into the corporation. Some types of information technology work require individuals to demonstrate theoretical knowledge and well-developed reasoning, whereas other types require persons to visualize outcomes, anticipate problems, and manage projects, budgets, and people.

Formal Education and Training

In past years, different kinds of formal education have been required for different kinds of information technology work. For instance, research positions generally require post-baccalaureate degrees. Yet, the benefits of higher education in general (critical thinking, abstract reasoning skills) have enabled persons earning a baccalaureate degree in any discipline to be effective in many information technology intensive corporations.

Work involving installation, maintenance, repair, or modification of an IT artifact generally requires skills that are based on the specific characteristics of the particular software or hardware rather than on abstract concepts or theoretical knowledge. Hence, most times these types of positions require an associate's degree, vocational or technical training, or graduation from certificate programs and/or vendor certification. The information technology sector also makes jobs available to persons graduating from high school technical programs, although most graduates from these programs tend to pursue more technical training in community or technical colleges. Certainly, there is much variation in the types of education and training required for different types of information technology work (National Research Council 2001).

Seventy-five percent of corporations in the business of computer equipment development and testing laboratories *require* new hires to have at least a baccalaureate degree in an information technology related discipline. Nearly 70 percent of systems analyses and engineering corporations have similar requirements. However, this is not the case for the type of IT work involving installation, maintenance, repair, and

modifications. Less than half of these types of industries require a baccalaureate degree.

When introducing women and minorities into this discussion, many of these hiring trends change. Regardless of the type of work, corporations tend to hire women and minorities with at least a bachelor's degree. Corporations prefer to hire women and minorities who are college educated. In a word, the immediate requirement for employment for women and minorities is *schooling*. That is the greatest inhibitor to entry into the corporation for most women and minorities.

Informal Knowledge and Situated Learning

Alone, formal education and training do not make a competitive and productive workforce. Although credentials from educational institutions and training programs are highly attractive to most employers, recent surveys indicate that *informal* knowledge and *situated* learning is essential for effective job performance. Work styles and "situated" understandings about materials, tools, and techniques are an integral part of a social system at work, home, or school. In this view, informal knowledge and situated learning, not derived from textbooks, work manuals, or company policies, are *contextualized*. In other words, skills learned or used in one context, especially in certain information technology industries, are not to be used in another. Thus, the notion that skills are *contextualized* makes some employers reluctant to hire individuals based solely on their academic performance in school or training programs.

Recall Marianna. Work experience was essential to her getting the job interview. It is an intended part of the application selection process. Unlike other professions where experience does not matter for entry, the essence of technical work builds on a foundation of basic knowledge that grows and is strengthened by more experience. Simply put, experience translates into greater productivity across the corporation. Sandra, a senior human resources manager, puts it this way in her interview:

Our work here requires that our scientists and engineers are experienced *before* we offer them the job. We recruit people who not only know the technology but are familiar enough to add to

it—you know, advancing it. Most of the time, we need new hires to hit the ground running. There is no time for holding hands or walking folks through their work requirements. It's just like medicine. When the doctor shows up in the emergency room, you expect him to practice! Your health depends on it. As for the company, our production depends on it.

However, in other work environments, inexperience is actually desired. Some companies want employees with as close to blank slates as possible. Inexperience allows for the development and manipulation of work habits and attitudes. Again, this is not the preference of most industries in the information technology sector. In fact, labor studies conducted in this sector indicate that work experience—be it managerial or technical—is crucial for maintaining productivity in the corporation (Lee 1999; Salzman 2000).

More so than other industries, software development, programming, and systems analyses and engineering companies consider experience essential for entry into the corporation. This is no surprise. Also requiring at least a four-year degree in a related field, these industries do not offer on-the-job training. Rather, after hiring, they expect to build on individuals' existing technical knowledge to further the company's productivity and innovation. On-the-job training is considered too costly and time consuming. Large corporations provide CD-ROM versions of training that allow the individual employee to "self-train," as opposed to offering expensive classes or seminars.

Work Experience

In the case of recruiting women and minorities, regardless of type of industry, corporations prefer work experience. Work experience plus formal education and training are important conditions for hiring women and minorities. This suggests that the corporation seeks the *best of the best* highly qualified female and minority candidates, as most organizations compare minority applicants to their minority peers. They are expected to be "above" the average hire. This above-average expectation is one factor that may contribute to corporations' difficulties in hiring women and minority talent.

Nonetheless, one sure way of hiring women and minorities with formal education and work experience is to recruit them from other corporations. Evidence here indicates that this has become a popular hiring strategy among many companies. Information technology companies, especially those in the same industry type, are like close cousins. They are familiar with one another's innovations, productivity, and position in the marketplace. Likewise, they know of each others' employment trends. Should the proportion of women and minority professionals be as low as reported, then their extraordinary works and accomplishments in this sector are no secret. Their high visibility, resulting usually from their innovation, makes them well-known icons in their respective industries. As such, they are likely to be targets of competition among corporate peers and affiliated organizations. Higher salaries, stock options, advanced career opportunities, and other job attractions motivate them to leave one company for another. However, this "star swapping" fails to contribute to increasing the overall number of women and minorities in the industry. Instead, it allows for the corporation—those that can afford them—to benefit from the talents and specialized skills of a handful of females and minorities who have proven to be "above average" in the technology field. Such stardom often creates a work environment wherein "average" women and minorities find it difficult to enter and compete.

Given that corporations demonstrate a preference for hiring women and minorities with extraordinary skills and training, I do wonder, where does this leave females and minorities who are *not* the best of the best? Are they automatically excluded from entry into the firm? National data confirm again and again that these groups are underrepresented in college and university majors related to science and engineering. The lack of education and training are major barriers to entry into the corporation. Given that this sector is built on a highly skilled and educated workforce, the issue of hiring women and minority talent is directly tied to its primary suppliers—colleges and universities. However, if colleges and universities are not producing an adequate supply of women and minority talent, are corporations forced to hire *lesser* qualified women and minorities and develop them internally to demonstrate a commitment to workplace diversity? The answer is no.

One might expect that, in a highly technical work environment, the last thing to be encouraged would be a negotiation of individual characteristics—qualities of individuals such as level of ambition, assertiveness, and the right education and experience for the job. The precision of technical work allows little room for developing broad and general skills among new hires. Bringing in and dealing with the skills of lesser qualified individuals creates a wealth of problems. For example, special corporate programs purposed to develop the skill sets and provide important work experience for target groups, such as women and minorities, are commonly faced with claims of reverse discrimination and accusations of unfair favorable treatment. Threats of class action suits, discord in the workplace, and negative publicity contribute to a corporation's decision to be rigorous concerning individuals' job qualifications.

The Lesser Qualified

Historically, corporations may have been more lenient in working with inexperienced and lesser qualified, underrepresented groups. Nearly fifty years since the civil rights movement resulting in landmark passages of legislation ensuring equal employment opportunities, corporations have seen generations of women and minorities pass through their doors. No longer is there the same level of passion or unrelenting devotion to grow lesser qualified women and minorities into entry-level positions. A half century has brought with it some fundamental societal changes that have impacted the composition of the workplace in most American corporations. Women and minorities are earning competitive degrees and they have made inroads in work environments that were once exclusively male and non-minority.

Hiring lesser qualified individuals also contributes to a lag in production. Information technology industries are fast-paced. In order to remain competitive, corporations must develop and retain some of the most highly skilled and qualified scientists and engineers who are able to keep up with continuously changing technologies and innovation. Time spent training or preparing those individuals who are not up to speed with current applications, designs, troubleshooting, and “out-of-the-box” thinking translates into slower production. Although seen as an untapped talent pool, most corporations cannot afford to invest much time and

many resources into lesser qualified women and minorities—the environment is simply too fast-paced and demanding.

Relatively few corporations in this study, less than 10 percent, actually hire less-qualified women and minorities. Industries relying on individuals with specialized skill sets do not lower their education and training requirements—even in the name of diversity. Most corporations interview women and minorities without the preferred credentials. However, they see great potential for future employment given additional formal education and work experience. This is true especially for the more knowledge-intensive industries. Unfortunately, this recognition of potential success in the corporation does not result in immediate hiring, nor is this often the case over time.

Recent employment surveys conducted in the information technology sector conclude that its future is contingent on behind-the-scenes technical gurus who orchestrate the interaction of numerous technologies to create comprehensive and, now more than ever, *secure* products. Credentials of recent hires who possess these specialized skill sets are formal education, resulting in an earned degree, specialized training, and information technology work experience. Corporations can ill afford to hire individuals who do not meet these qualifications.

During the past decade or so, when unable to find qualified job candidates, corporations typically turned to alternative strategies to meet their human resources needs. Outsourcing was one of the most popular ways of securing highly qualified employees. This turn toward employees outside the United States, particularly in India and South Asia, has been bedeviled with controversy.

Foreign Labor

Shifting jobs to low-wage countries, which is known as “offshore outsourcing,” has created a political debate centering on issues such as unfair international trade and its devastating costs to U.S. workers. Outsourcing has been incredibly emotional given two dramatically different effects—it leads to layoffs and dislocation for thousands of U.S. workers, and can ultimately strengthen the U.S. economy. At the center of this outsourcing controversy has been the high-tech industry.

Critics of high-tech companies sound the alarm of exploitation when corporations sponsor foreign, skilled workers for green cards—a process that can take years. If these workers complain about any issue related to their employment, they can easily be deported. Most experts differ as to what is the greater worry—importing foreign workers or offshoring technology jobs to low-wage countries.

High-tech companies have not hesitated to relocate their call centers and even their software development jobs to places including India, the Czech Republic, and Russia because labor costs are lower and skilled workers abound. More recently, however, there is so much global demand for employees proficient in programming languages, engineering, and other skills requiring high-level technology knowledge that outsourcing cannot meet all U.S. needs. Interestingly, an overwhelming majority of corporations in this study (85 percent) report that they are not involved in outsourcing. Most corporations believe that it erects obstacles that are difficult to overcome. For smaller businesses, resources are not readily available to conduct outsourcing and language and cultural barriers pose challenges. As a result, many corporations are requiring that their professionals take on new and complex roles that involve additional tasks and interactions with colleagues outside the corporation.

At one point, outsourcing, especially in the context of hiring foreign workers, was seen as a threat to all American workers, but especially to women and minorities, who are the most difficult to recruit and often the least desirable candidates. Statistics often bear out the dismal picture of the proportions of women and minorities in the information-technology sector. Should these numbers prove true, then, the presence of foreign workers, operating under temporary visas, creates a force of competition that is nearly impossible to reckon with. However, in the midst of upheavals about outsourcing and its affects, many corporations were determined to leave no stone unturned. They adopted and implemented *diversity strategies* geared to attract, hire, and retain U.S.-born women and minorities.

Understanding that women and minorities face substantive barriers to entry into the information-technology labor force, diversity strategies are a route to acquiring entry. However, corporations that manage key diversity initiatives are *not* exempt from difficulties associated with hiring

women and minorities. In fact, over 60 percent of corporations experience difficulty hiring women and minorities despite their adoption of diversity strategies. In some cases, then, the existence of diversity strategies may reflect the severity of and response to difficulty in hiring women and minority talent. There are certain industries that tend to adopt diversity strategies. An overwhelming 80 percent of software intensive corporations do so. On the other hand, only 37 percent of non-software and research intensive companies have strategies focused on diversity.

The adoptions of diversity strategies, in large part, are a function of corporations' efforts to reduce difficulty in hiring women and minorities. Corporations with diversity strategies have a *higher* proportion of women and minorities compared to those without them. This suggests that diversity strategies are related to the retention of women and minorities as well. In the case of Asian Americans, the presence of diversity strategies does not matter. The proportion of Asian Americans is about the same in corporations with and without diversity strategies. Historically, Asian Americans have maintained a higher representation than other minority groups in certain information technology industries. Recently, they have even surpassed the numbers of white males in high-tech companies. Rebecca, a vice president for human resources in this study, states:

Diversity strategies do make a difference. I have experienced that without them, our numbers of women and minorities have been lower. The strategies allow everyone to understand that the company is serious about bringing in women and minorities. And we are accountable to this. It kind of pulls everyone along ... you know, we're all on the same page ... at least in terms of company goals. Our diversity plans have truly made a difference. We have at least 15 to 20 percent more women and minorities on board because of our long-term plans to diversify our work environments.

To summarize, a careful look at corporations' perceptions of difficulty in hiring talent shows that what appeared to be a supply problem may really be a demand issue. Most corporations do not experience great difficulty finding new hires. But, when looking for women and minorities, the vast majority of corporations are challenged. Women and minority

hiring challenges are driven by the applicant pool, which is not fixed or predictable. Rather, it is contingent on the preparation that comes from outside the corporation—at the college or university level. The challenge of hiring women and minorities also varies by the nature of work. More so than other industries, software and research- and knowledge-intensive companies require new hires to have earned college credentials. Industries involving more practical skills—maintenance, repair, and installation—are less likely to require formal education and specialized knowledge.

However, it is important to understand that regardless of industry type, in the case of women and minority applicants, formal education and specialized knowledge is preferred and expected. Another avenue for hiring women and minorities that is sought by corporations is work experience. Despite the nature of technical work, corporations highly value work experience. Given its proven significant effect on productivity, experience ensures employers that new hires can quickly, easily, and effectively meet industry demands.

It is certainly no secret that women and minorities are at the lower tiers of earning college degrees in IT related disciplines. Without technical credentials, most women and minorities will find themselves knocking on the door without gaining entry. Corporations do not hire marginally qualified women and minorities. Although applicants show much potential, corporations do not hire and develop this potential internally. On the other hand, corporations do develop strategies to accomplish their work. They revert to outsourcing and hire foreign workers. In the case of women and minorities, corporations create and implement diversity strategies to avert barriers to entry and acquire untapped talent.

Although these issues are critical for understanding an important dimension of the hiring challenges and conditions faced by corporations, what is of primary interest here is why and how the corporation responds to them. It is my contention that diversity strategies are outcomes of not only corporate business goals but also other social forces that guide and influence their decision to implement diversity structures and behaviors. The succeeding chapters offer analyses and discussions of how these social forces shape how corporations address diversity.

CHAPTER 4

Corporate Perceptions of Political Pressure and Legal Mandates

No business is above Government; and Government must be empowered to deal adequately with any business that tries to rise above Government.

—Franklin Delano Roosevelt,
32nd President of the United States

One of the keys to understanding what drives a corporation to adopt and implement diversity strategies to examine the relationship between perceptions of legal mandates and political choices and the presence of diversity strategies. Often, corporations attempting to implement diversity structures and behaviors find it difficult to consistently focus attention on diversity given the winds of the economy, politics, and legal actions. Nonetheless, the substance of diversity behaviors originates from the legal and political environment. Hence, assumptions about their influence and contribution to corporations' decisions to adopt diversity strategies should be examined closely.

Institutional Environments

Early ideas about the influence of the external environment on organizations began with the assumption that organizations do not exist freely. Rather, they must behave in accordance with the laws and traditions of

their societies. That is, organizations are forced to adapt to the state and dominant subcultures. This institutional perspective rests on the notion that organizations must act in accordance with the rules, laws, and the traditions of their societies. Put simply, the power of the state permeates the boundaries of the organization and impacts its decisions and behaviors accordingly.

Classic studies on organizations and their environments by Meyer and Rowen (1977) and DiMaggio and Powell (1983) argue that the state exerts “coercive” pressure on organizations to adapt their structures to institutionalized norms. More recent research maintains that the American state has a powerful influence on employment relations policies within work organizations (Collins 1989; Baron, Dobbins, and Jennings 1996). In fact, legal mandates regulating employment practices result in ambiguous principles that provide organizations latitude to construct their own meaning of compliance in ways that meet both external demands and managerial interests (Edelman 1992).

This institutional logic permeates the corporate world. The federal government’s role in reducing employment discrimination continues to be significant. Many corporations perceive Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action mandates to be critical in the recruitment and hiring of women and minorities. However, as a motivation for adopting *diversity strategies*, many corporations fail to attest to the importance of nondiscrimination employment laws. Arguably, as an intervention, federal policies *alone* are important in driving the corporation to pursue women and minorities. The *law* continues to carry much weight in influencing corporations’ hiring decisions. Several corporations perceive diversity strategies as loosely tied to laws, yet they contend that they are a prevailing motivation for corporations’ interest in recruiting and hiring women and minorities.

Certainly, the idea of valuing and doing diversity in American corporations is commonplace. In fact, diversity, for many businesses, has become an important business strategy. Nevertheless, it is the longstanding historical role of federal mandates that continues to *regulate* corporate hiring structures and behaviors toward women and minorities. This leaves us with a critical question about the relationship between laws such as Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action and corporate diversity strategies: Is “doing diversity” the same as complying with Equal Employment Opportunity guidelines and implementing Affirmative

Action programs? The interpretation rather than the letter of the law comes into focus when examining this relationship.

Diversity Strategies *and* Affirmative Action?

As diversity interventions moved into place several years ago, influential groups such as academicians, the media, and national and political organizations argued that workplace diversity initiatives would soften, dilute, and lessen the original tenets of Affirmative Action. Some national and political organizations even claimed that corporate diversity was designed to ensure that women and minorities experienced *greater* difficulty earning promotions and advancements in the corporation. While this argument seems counterintuitive at first glance, it is important to realize that these strategies are not federally mandated, regulated, or standardized. They exist at the whim of the firm and can be easily manipulated, giving corporations the ability to present the outward appearance of diverse hiring, without actually changing their hiring practices with respect to women and minorities at all. Moreover, critics interpreted corporate diversity as non substantive and mere symbolic gestures of acting affirmatively. On the other hand, many scholars and professional organizations asserted that diversity strategies strengthen Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action by underscoring and building on its foundational principles and guidelines. In fact, diversity behaviors are viewed as broadening the original tenets of civil rights legislative programs and their applicability to the workplace. Like these critics, senior managers in this study have their own perceptions about the invisible chain that binds together Equal Employment Opportunity guidelines, Affirmative Action programs, and corporate diversity initiatives.

For many corporations, the relationship between Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action is clear—there really isn't one. Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action do not mandate formal strategies focused on hiring women and minorities. The longstanding role of government as a key player in ensuring equal employment opportunities has now shifted to a shared responsibility with the corporation itself. Laws alone are no longer the primary motivator for recruiting and hiring women and minorities. According to one interviewee, Shelia, a senior vice president for corporate diversity, diversity efforts, as opposed

to Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action mandates, are driven by organizational goals, not mandates:

Our diversity efforts are *not* related to Affirmative Action or Equal Employment Opportunity mandates. We are not *required* to develop and implement diversity practices. Diversity goes beyond policies like Affirmative Action. It is time for us to go beyond [...] to move forward [...] we must move forward to remain competitive. When you ask corporations are they doing diversity because the courts say you have to, the answer is no.

Expanding beyond the legal requirements and expectations of Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action, diversity strategies position the corporation to meet corporate goals that represent the interests and decisions of management. In this regard, diversity strategies do not stand alone, nor do they apply to only one area of the corporation. These strategies are fused with important goals throughout the corporation and in accordance with its vision and mission.

In particular, the notion of Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmation Action as a “starting point” to provide equal opportunities for women and minorities is shared by many corporations. No matter what policies or programs the government opposes or legislates, corporations assert that there is a sense of a “moral contract” with society to provide equal employment, opportunities, and financial reward. Pushing the Affirmative Action envelope, corporations desire to move to a broader concept—managing diversity. Diversity of all sorts—gender, race, culture, and age—aids corporations in their pursuit of excellence, which relies on a broad range of diverse populations.

While a variety of employment practices exist within the corporation, diversity initiatives, unlike legal mandates, are not shared or accounted for by entities *outside* the organization. Instead, several human resources professionals report that diversity is a creation of the corporation itself. Hence, the adoption of diversity strategies can be conceptualized as strategic responses to meeting industry needs, whatever they are. One human resources vice president, Yvonne, put it this way in her interview:

Diversity is far beyond and far more reaching than Affirmative Action requirements. You can do Affirmative Action and never, ever get anywhere near the things that people are doing in the area of diversity, because Affirmative Action is just the minimum and expected. So one is driven by law and minimum requirements, and the other one [diversity] is driven by the aspect of the company, the right thing to do [...] strategic concerns and initiatives [...] doing business, becoming the employer of choice [...] to be able to hire, especially if you're a specialty company needing a lot of different intellectual needs, like ours.

Physical Space and Structures

One critical component in establishing a distinction between the functions of Equal Employment Opportunity, Affirmative Action and diversity is the structural composition of office space, managerial positions, and reporting lines. For a number of corporations, preceding the adoption of diversity strategies, changes were typically instituted in the composition of human resources management departments. In most cases, these departments are considered home for most managers responsible for carrying out diversity plans. Changes occur through the process and outcome of establishing independent roles and job functions. For example, some corporations seek to establish legitimacy when adopting diversity strategies. In doing so, corporations choose to create a managerial position responsible for implementing diversity strategies exclusively. An individual and/or staff are appointed to manage and provide oversight for the corporations' hiring and retention activities based on its specific diversity goals. Separately, the corporation houses an Affirmative Action officer who is responsible for aiding the corporation in its commitment to equal employment opportunity and ensuring nondiscrimination throughout the workplace as established by the federal government.

Although some job functions and responsibilities may overlap, separate structures (i.e., office spaces, reporting lines, and managerial positions) address any confusion resulting from those job activities that straddle the boundaries of other departments or units. These structural

changes attempt to make clear the distinction between Equal Employment Opportunity, Affirmative Action, and diversity. Yvonne recalls:

When we first adopted diversity, Diversity and EO/AA were actually together, reporting to the same person, but the diversity person and I, together, agreed that it would be better if we were separated. And we were separated because we ourselves felt that people in the corporation weren't understanding the difference between EO/AA and diversity, so we asked to be separated so that people would begin to understand the difference between the two. Now, almost ten years later, we [the EEO/AA officer and the Diversity officer] report to the same person—the head of Corporate Diversity.

Diversity Strategies and Government Policy

However, not every corporation shares the same view on the relationship between Equal Employment Opportunity and diversity. Several corporations attest that the key to understanding corporate diversity is government policy. They believe that government policy inspires corporations to adopt diversity strategies. Historically, diversity efforts in corporate America emerged in *response* to the declining approval of Affirmative Action programs. As evidenced here, 85 percent of corporations adopted diversity strategies in the early 1990s—the hallmark of the backlash on Affirmative Action programs.

For over half a century, many corporations have benefited from Affirmative Action programs as they help accomplish important organization goals. Many corporations perceive Affirmative Action practices as creating opportunity and helping to eliminate both conscious and inadvertent discrimination by developing and using the full potential of the entire society. This is not only critical for the nation's economic growth but also for our social well-being and responsibilities as global leaders. Furthermore, several corporations believe that the absence of Affirmative Action practices raises concern that, despite big gains in the 1960s in certain industries, the elimination of preferences would result in a certain amount of backsliding even if largely unintentional.

Other corporations contend that as long as nondiscrimination laws remain on the books—and they will—a national means of implementing them is needed. Affirmative Action practices are favored over the alternative—an uncertain environment where the absence of clear guidelines would expand the potential for vulnerability to legal sanctions or, perhaps even worse, chaos in the corporation. And, diversity strategies are *dependent* upon this knowledge.

Many corporations consider Affirmative Action practices to be good business practices. As such, they refer to competitive advantage, global competition, and the global economy. Affirmative Action programs spark a level of creative energy that results in imagination, which leads to a successful company over time. This is essential to companies in the business of producing information technology. What a great foundation from which diversity strategies can build.

As many corporations see it, Equal Employment Opportunity, Affirmative Action, and diversity initiatives are inextricably linked. The federal policies are required *complements* to diversity. Diversity would not be possible *without* the compliance effect of Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action, because these plans are indeed comparable to most diversity strategies. That is, Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action plans are concerned with proportional racial and gender imbalances in the workplace, and diversity initiatives are designed to create and maintain a diverse work environment. Thus, these mandates shape diversity behaviors in such a way that they confirm each others' goals and outcomes. From this perspective, they are interdependent. During his interview, Walter, a senior manager of corporate diversity, states:

There is a strong relationship between Affirmative Action and diversity. Companies that say there's no relationship [...] I mean, we [diversity professionals] focus on representation; Affirmative Action focuses on representation. We work on employee relations, which has the Affirmative Action piece tied closely to them, and their tracking numbers—number of hires, representation, equal employment opportunity—which is all to me a part of diversity. Diversity is more focused on inclusion where Affirmative Action is more about women and minorities. But this is a big piece of

our diversity strategy, improving the representation of women and minorities. So, saying they don't relate to each other—I disagree.

Interestingly, less than 10 percent of corporations claim that there is no need for “strategic” efforts focused on hiring women and minorities. In fact, these views are rare. For this handful of corporations, diversity is not an issue. Established within the past twenty years or so, these companies maintain that their burgeoning industries are not faced with or challenged by issues associated with hiring women and minorities. They assert that they have “evolved” beyond the possibility of such issues. In fact, they have really never had to deal with them. These corporations argue that they are “global” and, as such, represent a nondiscriminatory *environment*. This opens up a new dimension for thinking about racial and gender diversity. The global view is tied to a global community comprising racial, ethnic, and culturally diverse groups, which ultimately translates into one thing—growing viable billion-dollar markets. However, I am not convinced that this explanation holds true. The global status of a corporation does not mean that it has evaded the longstanding issues of hiring decisions concerning women and minorities, but it does suggest one thing—perhaps these corporations use their global status as a justification for ignoring them completely.

Compliance

Adhering to federal guidelines and compliance concerning equal employment and nondiscrimination is viewed as simply obeying the law. Otherwise, developing and implementing diversity activities in line with or beyond federal policies is not the best use of time for the corporation. In fact, these efforts are perceived as passé and limiting. As one senior manager put it, “We don't discriminate; we can't afford to. We hire the best and the brightest and they include people from a broad spectrum of life. We are beyond discrimination; we are a global company.”

It appears as if the most effective means of getting corporations to pay attention to racial and gender discrimination is to file a lawsuit. The landmark case against American Telephone and Telegraph (AT&T) in 1972 set the stage for future court cases concerning employees' claims of

discrimination. Decided almost forty years ago, AT&T agreed to pay a hefty \$38 million to employees discriminated against by the corporation.

WalMart, the nation's largest retailer, is a prime example of the reality of legal sanctions and public scrutiny. Over the past few years, insidious bias and prejudice characterized their hiring practices, giving rise to numerous lawsuits by aggrieved employees. Similarly, the world's leading technology corporation, Microsoft, was hit with one of the largest discrimination suits, which was filed by seven African American employees—\$5 billion in damages was awarded to the plaintiffs. The automobile industry is not excluded. Nine white-collar workers at Ford Motor Company filed a multimillion dollar class-action age-discrimination suit, making it the first legal challenge to the company's controversial employee evaluation process.

Texaco's agreement to pay \$140 million to employees who accused the company of racial discrimination in its promotion process came after three other major discrimination cases against State Farm, Shoney's Incorporated, and Lucky Stores, in which payment to resolve federal suits charging discrimination exceeded \$100 million. Home Depot, Publix Super Markets, Motel 6, Dun & Bradstreet, Smith Barney, and Coca-Cola are also among hundreds of large corporations facing significant discrimination suits. The past three decades have seen a constant, fierce debate over how well corporations have rid themselves of discrimination. Women and racial minorities have more than tripled their presence in corporate management jobs since the 1970s, according to government reports. But members of these groups continue to complain of discrimination. One change is apparent, however. Complaints have shifted from those concerning hiring biases to harassment and discrimination in pay and promotion.

The overwhelming majority of corporations, 98 percent, claim that lawsuits are a primary factor affecting the decision to adopt and implement diversity strategies. Kevin, a senior HR director, states, "The firm cannot afford these lawsuits. These days, they are very costly, both financially and in terms of the company's public image. So, we use our diversity initiatives to protect us from possible legal action." On the contrary, some corporations assert that large discrimination settlements have little effect on their bottom line but a considerable impact on their public image and

reputation. From the court of law to the court of public opinion lie criticism and negative press.

Allegations of discrimination in major U.S. corporations bring about unfavorable attention from highly visible, national organizations. Let's look at the role of the NAACP. In 2008, WalMart received a C+ grade, which was the top grade awarded in the merchandising category—the average grade was a C. The Economic Reciprocity Initiative (ERI) grades major corporations on their business practices with respect to African Americans. This evaluation is a viable means for the NAACP to measure efforts or the lack thereof in important areas such as hiring, promotion, procurement, philanthropy, and marketing. Several corporations in the study, including Nordstrom Inc. and Sears, Roebuck and Company received failing marks for lack of participation. Others seemed to court the NAACP, including WalMart, which donated \$500,000 to the organization. Negative views associated with discrimination affects the corporation's attractiveness to women and minorities as well as potential minority business partners.

It is inevitable that discrimination lawsuits, however, impact employment policies—for the better. Corporations are likely to implement change resulting from legal sanctions, settlements, or public scrutiny in order to reduce their risk of future vulnerability to legal action. A vast majority of corporations report that it is legal action, primarily, that precipitated the implementation of their diversity initiatives. However, compared to the courts, less of a factor is the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).

The EEOC provides the force behind Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. This federal provision seeks to eradicate discrimination in employment in the United States. Administratively, the EEOC requires private firms to report the numerical distribution of minority workers. Over the past forty years, under the direction of the U.S. Congress, the EEOC has initiated civil suits in district courts in response to alleged discrimination and discriminatory patterns and practices against limited numbers of large employers (Purcell 1977). In 1973, the EEOC gained legitimacy and recognition by winning a consent decree from the landmark AT&T case. At the time, the EEOC created a system that tracked discriminatory practices in corporate America and received a significant amount of funding to hire more investigators and attorneys.

This demonstration of enforcement was a major impetus for corporations to revisit and bolster their hiring and promotion practices for minorities. A few years later, the EEOC would bring suits against some of the nations' most powerful corporations including Exxon, General Motors, Sears, Texaco, and Coca-Cola. Many corporations would end their struggle with the EEOC as signatories to binding consent decrees, obligating themselves to change their employment practices. By the mid 1970s, every large corporation in the United States had on board an EEO compliance officer and, in some cases, these individuals were given broad authority for hiring and promoting minorities (Thomas 1999). The process of investigating the validity of discrimination claims brings with it the tendency to smear publicly the image of the corporation while igniting the power of marginalized employees.

On average, 82,000 complaints are filed each year with the EEOC. Of these complaints, charges of discrimination based on race and gender far outnumber those based on age, national origin, religion, or disability (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission 2006). However, many civil rights experts agree that while the EEOC has concentrated its attention and resources on some of the most promising cases, it has also created a bottleneck or become a dead end for many others. The EEOC's heightened politicalization over the years is demonstrated by its presidential appointments, backlog of thousands of cases, and inadequate funding. People seeking assistance from this federal agency may be dissuaded from pursuing action. But by law, employees must complain to the EEOC before filing a discrimination suit in federal court.

Nonetheless, the legal enforcement of equal employment opportunity within and outside the courts has required corporate practices to be responsive to the employment conditions of women and minorities. Whether it is the costly impact of lawsuits or the unfavorable attention that they bring, many human resources professionals interviewed noted that corporations' behaviors are shaped by legal actions. For example, one interviewee, Sandra, a vice president for corporate diversity, puts it this way:

Let's look at discrimination lawsuits, for example, the lawsuit that Texaco was charged with or the lawsuit that Coca-Cola was charged with. When an organization is defending itself in a court

of law against a suit where they've been sued for some discriminatory practice, a lot of information gets dragged into those lawsuits. So to the extent that a corporation can point to a lot of what we would call "diversity activities," say a minority leadership program or an aggressive program for recruiting women into nontraditional female roles, or other things that you might think of as not primarily for the purpose of complying with the law, but for the purpose of enhancing the value of diversity for the corporation [...] to the extent that the corporation can point to diversity activities, it can improve its chances overall of doing well in the lawsuit.

However, this is not all. The impact of recent lawsuits on major corporations, in general, has captured the attention of important politicians and public policy. The White House and U.S. Senate have distinguished their interest in corporations' battles with class action lawsuits in particular. When viewed in this way, legislative efforts such as tort reform exist to curb corporations' accountability for unlawful behaviors such as civil rights violations. In fact, many legal experts argue that tort reform efforts are really about taking away people's rights to go to court and taking away access to courts, thereby undermining their constitutional right to trial by jury.

In February 2005, in a State of the Union address, President Bush urged lawmakers to rewrite tort law to do away with class action lawsuits that, he suggested, have become a drag on the United States economy. The president won an initial victory in tort reform when a bill sought by corporations to curb class action lawsuits advanced in the Senate. This legislation transfers most class action lawsuits from state courts to more stringent federal courts and is the first in a package of changes to the tort system sought by the Bush administration. In the State of the Union address, President Bush offered these words:

To make our economy stronger and more competitive, Americans must reward, not punish, the efforts and dreams of entrepreneurs. Small business is the path of advancement, especially for women and minorities. So we must free small businesses from needless regulation and protect honest job creators from junk lawsuits.

Justice is distorted and our economy is held back by irresponsible class actions and frivolous claims—and I urge Congress to pass legal reforms this year.

Federal Contracts

Other governmental influence on the adoption of diversity strategies is exercised by participation in federal contracts. Forty-two percent of corporations identify federal contracts as a motivator for adopting diversity strategies. Those with federal contracts or subcontracts of \$50,000 or more are required to comply with federal hiring guidelines or else have federal funding withdrawn. Data collected by Heckman and Payner (1989) indicate that a greater number of government contracts are awarded to companies with fewer incidents of alleged discrimination. Also, these authors found that federal contract-compliance programs significantly improve employment opportunities for minorities.

Over 70 percent of corporations who adopt diversity strategies participate in federal contracts. By default, federal contract compliance programs motivate the adoption of diversity strategies. For many corporations, the threat of losing great sums of federal dollars propels them to manage and maintain strategies focused on women and minorities. According to one interviewee, Kevin, there is an important relationship between federal contracts and diversity activities:

If you're a firm of this size and you do business with the federal government, you have to comply. [...] I mean, theoretically, diversity helps you in your marketing to diverse populations for employment opportunities with the organization. Yes, diversity plans help with compliance. If we're not in compliance, then we lose lots of money and the company is not going to stand for that. So, we do all that we can to not lose our funding.

Foreign Labor Laws

Despite the heavy load of federal mandates involving allegations of discrimination often followed by arduous lawsuits, corporations also find

themselves adjusting to political environments that entail international labor issues—for example, the foreign-born worker and the H-1B visa program. Much research shows that there is a continued heavy reliance on H-1B visa programs by employers in certain sectors, especially in information technology, but also in higher education, teaching, nursing, and other professional jobs. The information technology industries are global and are growing steadily in this direction. Countries other than the United States supply and produce information technology products, services, and talent. Hence, the role of foreign workers in information technology is salient and requires attention. The employment of foreign individuals in the United States workforce is quite controversial and continues to be the subject of a national political debate. Concerning information technology, foreign workers have, in essence, passed the relevance test (Kanter 1978). On the whole, they have proven to be positive contributors to the United States economy.

There are several “attractions” in employing foreign workers in the United States IT sector. First, foreign workers demonstrate specialized knowledge in software engineering and they tend to possess advanced degrees in information technology related disciplines as well as professional training prior to arriving in the country. When corporations are faced with inadequate applicant pools, they may well turn to foreign talent given their specialized knowledge and training. Second, most foreign workers are facilitators of connections between their country of origin and the United States. Third, rarely dismissed is the argument that information technology corporations are able to reduce labor costs associated with foreign workers. This claim rests on the empirical findings that foreign individuals are willing to work for less pay than comparably trained U.S. workers.

These popular justifications for hiring foreign workers were sold to Congress and the public in order to alleviate significant “shortages” of workers in certain and necessary industries. However, the story here is a bit more complicated. Ideally, H-1B visas were granted to corporations to access foreign workers on a temporary basis to supplement the U.S. workforce and to provide a means for companies to attract uniquely skilled and qualified workers. The H-1B visa was good for a period of up to three years with the possibility of a renewal of a second three-year period.

As to the issue of job vacancies and qualifications—the law does not require corporations to demonstrate that there is a shortage of U.S. workers for a particular job or that they have tried and failed to find qualified U.S. workers. In fact, according to the Center for Immigration Studies, many job openings are never advertised or offered to U.S. workers. Even more startling, as documented by the advocacy group Bright Future Jobs, some corporations are openly conducting “H-1B Visa Only” recruiting campaigns—literally advertising that U.S. citizens and legal immigrants need *not* apply. The U.S. Labor Department maintains that this practice is legal.

Most industry reports indicate that H-1B workers must have and must fill a job that requires at least a bachelor’s degree or equivalent experience. However, prospective workers need not demonstrate any special expertise or fill any extraordinary need. In fact, more than half of the jobs filled by H-1B workers in 2005 were classified as “entry-level” or “trainee” by the employer on the application. Most H-1B workers are relatively young. Because 65 percent of H-1B workers are twenty-four to thirty-four years of age, few of them can realistically be considered to have demonstrated exceptional accomplishment. Forty-five percent have no more than a bachelor’s degree, while only five percent have a doctorate.

As to the issue of salaries and compensation, the law does require that corporations pay H-1B workers what is known as the “prevailing wage”—a salary that is comparable to what a U.S. worker earns. This provision is intended to discourage corporations from hiring foreign workers at lower salaries. Yet, these regulations have proven ineffective. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, corporations pay H-1B workers an average of \$16,000 dollars less per year than U.S. workers in the same job and location (Center for Immigration Studies, *Low Salaries for Low Skills: Wages and Skill Levels for H-1B Computer Workers*, 2005). Specifically, the median salary offered to H-1B workers is \$60,000 per year (Department of Homeland Security *Characteristics of Specialty Occupation Workers H-1B* 2008).

Corporations need only indicate on the applicant’s employment documentation that they will pay a prevailing wage and that the workers they are sponsoring are not laid-off U.S. workers. There is no authority that checks these claims. The U.S. Department of Labor has no authority to investigate applications unless they receive a complaint from an employee. Therefore, there is no governing authority that checks to see if the business really exists,

if there is an actual job opening, or if the salary offered is really paid. The process is automated; as long as the employer signs the form and includes a check, the application is approved (Center for Immigration Studies 2005).

Despite the relative advantages to hiring foreign workers, there are serious negative impacts as well. The crux of the debate concerning foreign information technology workers is that the use of foreign workers has deleterious effects on U.S. workers. Critics contend that the increase in the supply of foreign information technology workers detrimentally affects U.S. workers by job displacement and the suppression of wages. It stands to reason that individuals most vulnerable to the arrival and employment of foreign information technology workers are women and minorities.

Central to the issues described here is the way in which foreign information technology workers enter the U.S. labor force. Direct recruitment from abroad and change or adjustments in the status of an individual residing in the U.S. are major ways for obtaining U.S. employment. Direct recruitment typically refers to sponsorship from a U.S. firm or its affiliates. This is the usual means by which most foreign individuals enter the information technology workforce, although for a limited period of time, the U.S. requires foreign individuals to possess temporary visas in order to enter the workforce. But most relevant to information technology industries is the H-1B visa made available to foreign workers for no more than six years in a "specialty occupation." Work areas in the specialty occupation category include computer programming and engineering.

It is no secret that the H-1B visa is favored among information technology corporations. According to the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, nearly 60 percent of all H-1B visa holders are employed by IT intensive companies. Similarly, according to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service, computer-related occupations are by far the most popular among H-1B visa holders, making up 42 percent of total petitions. Not surprisingly, the information technology sector has called for increasing or eliminating the H-1B visa cap. Although the U.S. government's fiscal year 2011 has set the H-1B visa cap at \$65,000, the comprehensive immigration bill recently passed in the Senate would raise the yearly limit to \$115,000. However, during the 1990s, before the terrorist attacks in 2001, the H-1B visa cap was as high as \$195,000. Congress began reducing the number because of concerns about national security

and pressure from trade protectionists who believed that information technology jobs should be available to American workers exclusively.

Motivated by the idea that there are simply not enough qualified and skilled Americans to fill vacant positions, the proposed increase in the H-1B visa cap is intended to help bridge the alleged vacancy gap. According to the U.S. Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services, this is the third consecutive year and the eighth time in the last ten years that the allotment of H-1B visas has reached the determined limit prior to the beginning of the federal fiscal year.

Critics of the H-1B visa program contend that information technology corporations are not drawn to foreign workers because of labor shortages but rather because of financial incentives. Research shows that information technology corporations hire H-1B workers in jobs requiring lower skill levels thus resulting in lower wages, less senior job titles, smaller signing bonuses, lower pay, and less compensation over time (Salzman 2000). Federal immigration data indicate that wages for 85 percent of foreign computer programmers hired under the H-1B visa program earned less than the median U.S. wage for the same occupations.

In this view, critics are concerned with the impact of the H-1B visa program on wages and benefits for domestic workers. Such financial incentives could extend to the lower wages and poorer benefits for U.S. workers. Most critics of the H-1B visa program focus attention on the permanence of foreign information technology workers in the U.S. labor force. In other words, will the increased supply of foreign labor under the H-1B visa program inevitably decrease the demand for U.S. workers?

The foreign and H-1B visa phenomenon is of great concern to those troubled by the underrepresentation of women and minorities in the information technology sector. My study found that nearly 90 percent of corporations who adopt diversity strategies perceive that the H-1B visa program is a force to be reckoned with. Some researchers argue that the declining number of women and the scant percentage of minorities in information technology are linked to the H-1B visa program. As for women in the information technology labor force, their underrepresentation is related to the disproportionate number of male H-1B visa holders. Federal data indicate that women make up less than 25 percent of temporary workers and trainees admitted to the U.S. under the H-1B visa program.

U.S. racial minorities are also impacted by the H-1B visa program. Given the existence of employment discrimination, the H-1B visa program is believed to *discourage* corporations from recruiting and hiring women and minorities. A study commissioned by the Coalition for Fair Employment in Silicon Valley (no longer in business), a group claiming to represent thousands of minority professionals, found that out of eighty-five information technology corporations, thirteen actively discriminated against women and minorities, and twenty-four lacked minority recruitment plans required under the guidelines of their federal contracts.

In fact, one company in the Coalition's study was ordered to pay nearly \$215,000 in back pay and other civil remedies for improperly denying low-level technical jobs to Latino applicants, whom the Department of Labor determined were qualified for the positions. In the face of such discriminatory hiring practices, the H-1B visa program serves as a "legitimate" route for information technology corporations to disregard U.S.-born women and minority talent. For instance, one interviewee, William, a senior manager of the office of diversity, states:

The H-1B visas are controversial, especially when we are faced with issues of hiring racial minorities in the U.S. There is no way that we can lose when hiring foreign workers who are already technically trained in the areas we need them. I feel bad about the issue [...] but what has happened is that we've found a "better" source of labor and it works for us right now. I do agree that it makes it more difficult for us to hire minorities, especially when they lack the skills or education we want. This is why they must try to stay competitive ... we're now a global society. No longer are we limited to our borders. And the company is going to do whatever it needs to in order to remain competitive. There's simply too much competition out here these days. And honestly, sometimes hiring someone from India or China is best for the corporation all around. It's the times we're living in now.

Most corporations perceive federal mandates to be important in the recruitment and hiring of women and minorities. However, these corporations vary in the significance they attach to EEO/AA. Corporations

in this study admitted that EEO/AA legislation made a difference in implementing and managing diversity initiatives. In fact, in most cases, EEO/AA operates as an invisible hand; that is, EEO/AA are clearly felt even though their practices and behaviors are not identified under the banner of “diversity.” Because of its compliance effect, EEO/AA continue to provide the foundation on which the recruitment and hiring of women and minorities is built. In fact, more so than ever, with tort law reform and other political efforts designed to protect the corporation’s role and place in the economy, Affirmative Action programs can be viewed as the guardian of Equal Opportunities. Motivated by government policy or corporate interests, what is at stake is a greater representation of women and minorities in America’s information technology industries.

It cannot be understated that legal sanctions and public scrutiny play an important role in the adoption of diversity strategies. Unlike Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action, diversity efforts are used as strategic defenses in order to reduce or minimize risk to allegations of discrimination resulting in possible lawsuits. Historically, legal sanctions and public scrutiny associated with employment discrimination claims have established precedents within corporations. In turn, corporations are encouraged strongly to implement strategies in response to vulnerability to legal action and negative public opinion.

On the other hand, government policy can result in unfavorable consequences for women and minority job candidates. By its very nature, the H-1B visa program, which is quite popular among information technology corporations, is a potential barrier to entry into the information technology labor force for U.S.-born individuals, especially women and minorities. In fact, it is a legalized means of denying women and minorities access to employment and career opportunities. In the final analysis, the representation of women and minorities in information technology corporations may hinge on political forces, particularly as it relates to foreign workers and the H-1B visa program.

Of great concern to me as a university professor is the possibility that college students, in response to corporations’ preference for foreign workers in information technology industries, will opt themselves out of science and engineering fields and enter fields where career opportunities are brighter, such as law and business. Noticeably, over the past several years,

major universities have reported that science and engineering majors enrollments have decreased, resulting in an overrepresentation of foreign-born students in these fields.

As for public policy, it is important to note that Affirmative Action's backlash is not only about its unpopularity as a political program, but also that many of its opponents seek to provide evidence of its ineffectiveness. Research findings are quite conclusive that the government's role is paramount in providing equal opportunities for women and minorities (Herring and Collins 1995; Heckman and Payner 1989). As for researchers who argue that government policies have played a trivial role in women's and minorities' advancement in the workplace, they fail to consider the effects of employment opportunities that sprang directly from federally funded welfare and community service organizations that coincided with civil rights protests in the 1960s. In fact, civil rights activities in the 1960s stimulated more heavily the federal governments' efforts to establish equal employment opportunity laws which were established as early as the 1940s (Collins 1997).

Despite President Bush's arguments in the State of the Union address in 2005, the absence of legal sanctions and negative public opinion regarding the hiring of women and minorities is troubling to me. Given that discrimination still exists and is accompanied by hate, prejudice, and perceived threat, it is virtually impossible for true equality to exist in the workplace. Legal sanctions and public scrutiny have contributed greatly to women's and minorities' entry and advancement in corporations. Government policy, especially Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action, is linked to modern-day diversity initiatives. This relationship demonstrates the dependency and fragility of women and minorities within federal policy and corporate strategies.

At the heart of this discussion throughout this chapter is a characterization of diversity as influenced by federal policy, legal decisions, and political activity. Taken together, legal pressures and political choices are important factors in explaining the complexity and challenges associated with the adoption of diversity strategies. An important piece of the puzzle, legal pressures and political choices, sheds light on the environmental forces that drive corporations to develop strategic initiatives focused on women and minorities.

CHAPTER 5

Corporate Relationships with HBCU's and Other Minority Association

Social responsibility isn't a deep shift because it's a voluntary tactic. A tactic, a reaction to a certain market at this point. And as the corporation reads the market differently, it can go back. One day you see Bambi, next day you see Godzilla.

—Elaine Bernard, Executive Director of the Labor and Worklife Program at Harvard Law School and a prominent member of the Democratic Socialists of America

Having discussed my findings and analyses with my dearest friend Dawn, I was warned about readers' interpretations and conclusions. As a graduate of Spelman College, her concern about this chapter is that only one side is presented—that of the corporation. She is worried that my results may be misunderstood and misinterpreted. Because the historically black college and university (HBCU) experience is uniquely different from that experience in predominantly white colleges and universities, Dawn claims that this experience isn't easily understood without actually attending one of the nation's one hundred five HBCUs.

Dawn believes that those representing “white” corporations tend to measure their experiences with HBCUs against those of predominantly white colleges and universities. Inevitably, here lies a problem. Understanding Dawn's concerns and her unique perspective on my work, I do face a rather daunting challenge. For it is not my intention to show our

nation's preeminent historically black colleges and universities in a negative light, but rather it is to provide insight on corporations' perceptions of their experiences with these institutions as a primary means for attracting and hiring women and minority talent. And so, I proceed here with caution.

As discussed earlier, the perceived influence of legal and political environments have become a characteristic feature of corporations that adopt diversity strategies; so too have interorganizational relationships. Today, more so than ever, strategic alliances and partnerships with national organizations and colleges and universities provide the private sector with the human capital necessary for ensuring competitive advantage and productivity in the global economy. This chapter explores and characterizes recruitment strategies geared toward attracting women and minorities into the information technology corporation. Specifically, our discussions focus on the relationships among information technology corporations, HBCUs, and women and minority science and engineering associations. At the heart of my analyses is resource dependency—that is, interorganizational ties that are essential to the survival of the corporation. They simply cannot function alone or without cooperation from other organizations.

Resource Dependency

Faced with environmental conditions such as uncertainty and instability, the resource dependence model posits that an organization is not capable of generating all the various resources that it needs. Therefore, organizations are dependent on the environment for key resources such as raw material, finances, personnel, services, or production—simply put, significant resources that the organization does not perform or provide for itself (Hall 1999). What is important here are the *decisions* that the organization makes. Central to this premise is that *decisions* are made within the internal political context of the organization (Schreyogg 1980) and they deal with environmental conditions faced by the organization. An important aspect of the resource dependence model is that organizations attempt to deal actively with the environment. They manipulate the environment to their own advantage. Rather than operating as passive recipients of environmental forces, organizations will make strategic

choices about adapting to the environment (Aldrich and Pfeffer 1976; Pfeffer and Salancik 1978). The role of management, of course, is vital to this process.

Because the sources of resources in the environment may be other organizations, resource dependence can be thought of as *interorganizational* resource dependence. In other words, this collaboration indicates that organizations rely on other organizations to provide vital resources to thrive and survive. It is necessary to note that a key dimension of resource dependence is *strategic choice* (Chandler 1962; Child 1972). This notion suggests that organizations make decisions from among a set of alternatives in regard to the strategy that the organization will use in its dealings with the environment. Moreover, the assumption is that the environment does not force the organization into a situation in which no choice is possible. Hence, the organization is faced with other possible alternatives in dealing with the environment. There is never only one choice. In this view, I assert that a characteristic of information technology corporations adopting diversity strategies is that they enter into interorganizational relationships. Specifically, that they work closely and develop partnerships with major suppliers of women and minority talent. Based on this assumption, I examine corporations' relationships with HBCUs and women and minority science and engineering associations.

The Historically Black College and University

Since the implementation of Affirmative Action programs in the late 1960s, HBCUs have emerged as fertile grounds for corporate recruiters. Over the past few decades, corporate America has sought talented individuals enrolled in HBCUs to fill challenging job positions. In fact, some studies suggest that students who attend HBCUs are typically more professionally oriented and mature than those drawn to majority institutions (Sturm and Moroh 1994). Such an orientation may certainly lead to a preference for majors in the scientific and engineering disciplines such as computer science and other technology related fields of study (National Science Foundation 1998). Today, HBCUs represent nearly 30 percent of all underrepresented groups entering the information technology labor force. The impact of the HBCU in this sector is quite significant.

Data collected by the National Science Foundation (2001) indicate that HBCUs have developed strategic approaches to motivate students to declare majors in IT related fields of study. Consequently, the proportion of these majors enrolled in HBCUs differs significantly from those at predominantly white colleges and universities. On average, between 1989 and 1996, HBCUs granted twice as many degrees in computer science than did majority institutions. Moreover, a relatively large number of students attending majority institutions that are attracted to and express an interest in information technology disciplines do not complete their degrees in such fields. As I discussed in Chapter 1, explanations for the difference in the number of science and engineering degrees granted to whites and African Americans in both types of institutions lie perhaps *not* in the profiles of their students, but rather in the ways in which the institutions attract and retain students in information technology disciplines.

Let's recap some important insights presented in Chapter 1 concerning the role of the "pipeline model" in HBCUs and predominantly white colleges and universities. To understand what HBCUs are doing differently to produce minority students in information technology majors, let's consider the role and impact of the pipeline model. The National Research Council claims that majority institutions implement the pipeline model by having students navigate certain barriers that are designed to filter out individuals who are incapable of attaining the higher levels of scientific knowledge. Students who remain in the pipeline are expected to enter into the scientific and technical professions and to do well.

On the contrary, the pipeline model is used quite differently in the HBCU. Instead of "filtering" students, the HBCU model stresses inclusion. This means that extensive outreach, mentoring, and support are key elements. Students are not left to fend for themselves; a supportive environment within the institution as well as among peers is fostered. When students experience academic difficulties, intellectual, emotional, and academic supports are made available. Studies indicate that the HBCU model, especially the mentoring component, is also effective in attracting and retaining women in science and engineering majors (Sturm and Moroh 1994; Walker and Rodger 1996).

Therefore, it is easy to assume that corporations attempting to increase their proportions of women and minorities would benefit from

establishing partnerships with HBCUs in that they are a repository of specialized technical and scientific knowledge. However, as revealed in this study, the relationship between many corporations and HBCUs has *changed*. HBCUs are no longer perceived as a *preferred* source of women and minority talent. In fact, corporations are becoming less and less dependent on HBCUs to provide a diverse talent pool. They are seeking alternative choices in order to meet their critical needs for highly qualified and well-trained professionals.

Despite these popular and convincing reasons for recruiting at HBCUs, many corporations argue that organizational ties with them are *not* a very effective means of recruiting women and minority talent. In fact, corporations report common experiences with HBCUs. Furthermore, there are several factors contributing to corporations' resistance and reluctance to enter into and maintain interorganizational relationships with many of these colleges and universities.

Exorbitant Costs

A major concern of recruiting at HBCUs is the exorbitant *financial costs* associated with doing so. Corporations' growing disdain for recruiting at HBCUs is inextricably tied to their perceptions of their role as *financiers*. One senior HR executive characterizes the relationship between the corporation and HBCUs in the following way: "You know, it's like they hold corporate America hostage!" Faced with significant financial burdens, corporations realize that HBCUs are likely to charge as much as four times the amount required by majority institutions to participate in university recruiting activities such as job fairs. However, the high cost of participating in campus job fairs is only one aspect of corporations' frustrations with recruiting at many HBCUs.

There is widespread feeling among corporations that HBCU job fairs *vary* in terms of *quality*. Eighty-three percent of corporations in this study insist that some HBCU job fairs fail to meet industry standards. Inadequate space, poor planning, and low student participation are factors associated with negative views about HBCU job fairs. On the other hand, some HBCUs provide adequate resources and the necessary infrastructure to ensure the smooth operation of campus job fairs. Put simply, some

HBCUs are better prepared than others to receive and host corporate sponsors. One interviewee, Sonya, a senior human resources manager, put it this way:

The costs to participate in their recruitment activities are two, three, four times more expensive. And then you pay for advertising on top of that [...] plus you pay to be a sponsor as well. Some of the schools do it very, very well and you get the bang for your buck. But there are other schools that do not. I have seen that impact of the financial barriers to companies getting in there [...] they will participate, though, maybe because diversity is important to them.

In corporations where recruiting budgets vary from year to year, meaning from higher to lower levels, frustrations center not only on the high costs attached to participating in campus job fairs, but also on the negative attitudes shown by HBCUs toward corporations that decline to participate in campus job fairs. Certain HBCUs tend to tarnish the corporation's established reputation of corporate giving and philanthropy through "word of mouth" bashing in higher education and corporate circles. As observed by Sonya:

To participate in their recruitment fairs is tremendously expensive. The cost of entering is very expensive. And they're fickle. If you come one year and don't come the next, they kind of turn your picture to the wall. If you drop them one year because business has turned bad—and of course we all go through that—then all of a sudden you're in a *non gratis* position. They [HBCUs] won't hesitate to spread the word about your corporation and how it fails to "do the right thing."

There are additional factors that discourage relationships with HBCUs. Eighty-seven percent of corporations contend that the process of recruiting at HBCUs is labor intensive and requires a great deal of money, time, and commitment on the part of the corporation. When assessing the impact of corporate finances and time commitments required

for recruiting at HBCUs, many corporations report that there is little to no return on their investments. Often, the corporations' recruitment efforts do not result in the identification or attraction of actual job candidates. Students do not express sincere interest in employment opportunities and rarely do they spend substantive time with recruiters. In addition, it is unlikely that interviews take place on campus, and the collection of resumes is usually a matter of protocol rather than actually reviewing each individually. Here is how one interviewee, Michael, a senior human resources manager describes his observation:

The relationships are very expensive and the relationships take a tremendous amount of effort on the corporation's part. They don't always necessarily lead to the best recruiting. I have found—and this is my experience, so my personal opinion—that there's a huge expectation on the part of those historically black universities in particular that a corporation is going to just pour tons of money into that university, and there are really no guarantees that that is going to be a reciprocal relationship. That just is the cost of doing business, the cost of entry. And you've got to work that year in and year out.

Time

The notion and use of *time* by corporations differs considerably compared to its utility by HBCUs and higher education institutions in general. In fact, that old saying is appropriate here: *Time is money*. Many corporations perform services comparable to those offered by their majority competitors. That is, corporations compete for the best and the brightest and there are times when they do compete for the same individual. Efforts focused away from hiring highly qualified and well-trained individuals at a reasonable and competitive cost are viewed as a waste of time and an unnecessary burden on the corporation. On the contrary, colleges and universities ascribe to time primarily in terms of academic and teaching schedules that fall during certain seasons of the year—fall, winter, and spring. Time, then, has very little to do with the institution's bottom line. For higher education institutions, time pressures and restraints rarely

impact their ability to compete among their peers, given that there is no profit-driven or bottom-line agenda. For example, it is not unusual for academic departments to consider and pursue their interests in creating new programs for several years. This would not be the case for corporations. Timothy, an interviewee in this study and a vice president for corporate diversity, offers these comments on the high costs and excessive time commitments associated with recruiting at HBCUs:

We'll [corporations] try recruiting at these HBCUs and we see the cost associated with it [...] we won't initially get the return that we think we need. You can't go into these schools and pay double at a career fair and expect to hire ten people. It takes a very long time to establish the relationship with them. And, often, many recruiting departments don't have time to wait.

Recognizing that time is indeed a factor in recruiting at HBCUs, 79 percent of corporations claim that, on average, it takes a minimum of three to five years to experience a steady flow of students into the corporation. This is considered a relatively fair amount of time indicating a substantive investment on the part of the corporation as well as the college or university. However, the complaints about time in many corporations have much to do with their perceptions of how difficult it is to work with some HBCUs. Many of these colleges and universities are perceived as failing to demonstrate a capacity and commitment to work cooperatively with corporations.

Representation

Corporations report that certain HBCUs have staff members who do not represent the college or university's best interests. Personality types and attitudes are perceived as interfering with appropriate organization practices geared to engage and solicit corporate involvement. Several corporations are uncomfortable with existing structures purposed to respond to and interact with them. Offices and departments authorized by the college or university to work with corporations are considered to be inapt for

developing and maintaining university-corporate relations. Frustrations of corporate managers with HBCUs have led them to characterize the HBCU-corporate relations experience in one way: HBCUs are *recipients* solely of corporate sponsorship and good will. And, they do not offer much in return. Michael sums it up this way:

[Referring to working with HBCUs] I don't think most corporations, except in some instances, always need to see immediate results, but it's got to be *easy* to work with, it's got to be easy to do business with, there has to be at least a give and take both ways. I think at some of the schools it simply hasn't been that way. It has been very difficult to work with them.

Competition

One of the most common beliefs among corporations is that HBCUs are no longer the exclusive and primary source of women and minority talent. Given many of their unfavorable experiences with them and the increased number of women and minorities majoring in information technology disciplines in majority colleges and universities, corporations are entering into more and more partnerships with predominantly white colleges and universities in hopes of hiring qualified and well-trained talent. Walter captures this sentiment:

You have really got to make a huge commitment to the HBCU and then you may not even get anything out of it. So what I think a lot of corporations have done is they've said look, there are a lot of great universities out there, and they have large minority populations. And again, we're all going after the same people and they are in limited supply, so you've got to branch out; there's no way you should put all of your eggs in one basket in this game. For instance, University of Michigan—fabulous engineering school, high minority population—is a great place to recruit. Chances of you picking up one or two there are almost better and less costly than having this huge relationship with Prairieview and Howard Universities.

Contrary to popular belief, many corporations have quietly shifted their focus and attention to recruiting women and minority students from non-HBCU institutions. In fact, recruitment decisions are not made lightly. Where corporations decide to recruit and their level of involvement requires formal decisions and approval from senior management. The vast majority of corporations agree that it is *easier* to recruit at predominantly white colleges and universities despite the small numbers of women and minorities enrolled in science and engineering majors.

Corporations' lessened dependency on federal contracts and compliance with Affirmative Action has consequences for recruiting at HBCUs in particular. The emphasis and broadened desire to develop and maintain itself as a global organization permits the corporation to forego its longstanding history with many HBCUs. The political environment especially no longer requires or expects corporations to use HBCUs' unique status among American colleges and universities as primary suppliers of women and minorities. On the other hand, corporations' efforts to recruit at non-HBCUs provide opportunities to shape and influence the kinds of structures and practices associated with hiring recent and prospective graduates. Without the perceived limitations of federal policies and racialized programs, corporations have a greater chance of assimilating college and university structures to mirror those of their own, therefore increasing their chances to become key players in the life span of the institution.

Over 60 percent of corporations argue that recruitment at non-HBCUs leads to acquiring better qualified and well-trained employees. The suggestion that students who attend HBCUs and major in science and engineering are somewhat less prepared than those graduating from non-HBCUs is quite familiar. For years, many members of the higher education community have maintained that students educated at HBCUs lacked competitive skills and preparation for entry into corporate America. In her interview, Diane, a senior vice president, states:

From a diversity and a female perspective, we have kind of mixed results in terms of do we go to HBCUs in the South to target the overall population, or do we go to a school like University of Michigan or Purdue or Carnegie-Mellon and target the diverse

student populations at those schools. Although there is a smaller number of minorities, but maybe the overall credentials of those students that are there are going to be higher than the overall academic standards of an HBCU school? We're really trying to figure this out now. But so far, we've had pretty good results recruiting diverse students from non-HBCUs.

Students who graduate from colleges and universities whose structures, behaviors, and cultures reflect those of the corporation are more likely to "fit" the corporate model of an ideal employee. The milieu of non-HBCUs is more likely to pave the way for students' adaptation to white-dominated work environments. Indeed, recruiting for diversity at non-HBCUs would be *easier* given minimal and insignificant differences in corporate-university practices, processes, and expectations. Simply put, corporations' pursuit of women and minorities at non-HBCUs eliminates many difficulties and frustrations resulting from different ways of managing and operating work organizations.

Concerns about HBCUs' motivation to establish relationships with corporations are reflected in companies' perceptions about a college or university's role in securing competitive jobs for its students. Eighty-six percent of corporations believe that most HBCUs demonstrate a stronger commitment to ensuring corporate giving than to nurturing corporate-university partnerships geared toward increasing the number of women and minorities in American corporations. Many corporations point out that an overemphasis on securing funds runs the risk of compromising the best career opportunities for students. This perception that HBCUs are limited in their use of corporate relationships is a serious one. It is a common thread that brings together corporations' explanations of HBCUs' behaviors. That is, the concern with financial sponsorship has overshadowed any and most prospects of long-term and substantive opportunities for influencing and shaping colleges and universities' structures and behaviors. One interviewee, Elizabeth, is a senior vice president for human resources and is very passionate about this perception:

I don't know that they're really serving their student body as well as they could, because I don't think they're always keeping them

in mind as their first customer, their client. I think they're a little bit more worried about their coffers than they are about whether or not their students are really getting access to the best opportunities out there. In some ways I think they exclude corporations from wanting to participate, and therefore I think they close off some of those opportunities that might otherwise come to their campus for their students.

Yes, I think they're [HBCUs] more concerned about their coffers than their students and the opportunities that are presented to their students. I think that they kind of shoot themselves in their own foot. They've [HBCUs] got something that the corporations want [...] so, let's make them pay, and so that will make our university stronger and our coffers will be more.

Leadership

One issue that complicates further corporations' relationships with HBCUs is their perception of college leadership. Nearly 75 percent of corporations view many HBCU presidents as demonstrating poor leadership in this area. Specifically, they claim that senior-level administrators fail to understand corporate fundraising and strategic partnerships. HBCUs do not network well with corporations. They often are inclined to designate inappropriate departments, such as college career services and career planning counselors, to work with and nurture relationships with senior corporate managers.

Further, these departments are not concerned with developing long-term strategies with corporations but rather are purposed to solicit funds and sponsorships for the college or university. Frequently, corporations experience negative attitudes and resistance to corporate ideas, practices, and plans associated with their presence on campus. Hostility and volatile behaviors from college and university personnel create an environment in which anticipated alliances and partnerships cannot be forged. These perceptions may result from individuals' issues associated with institutional power and turf. And, the fact that no sanctions exist to remedy corporations' negative views contributes to their anxiety and difficulty in

working with certain HBCUs. Referring to his experiences over the past few years, Walter recalls in his interview:

Well, we need to be at Howard University, for example, because we want to be a good corporate citizen and they're an HBCU in our region. But trying to deal with them from a logistical and an easy-to-do-business-with standpoint is very, very difficult. I am referring to the *people* and the commitment of the people. Even at some of the traditional or predominantly white colleges, there are career centers, there are people in important positions that corporations deal with on an ongoing basis. There are a number of schools out there that have the wrong people in those positions, what I'll call the "old school" people. I think some HBCUs are very difficult to work with just from a people standpoint.

However, several corporations identify a couple of HBCUs—Morgan State and Florida A&M—that get the gold star for developing and nurturing relationships with corporate America. They credit university presidents. Many corporations claim that university presidents, not their designees or lower-level officers, are responsible for forging and maintaining positive relationships with them. One senior manager argues that Florida A&M is a model institution in this regard: "The president at the time, James Humphrey, really knew how to fundraise. He understood corporate culture. It's been my experience that very few HBCU presidents *really* understand corporate culture and fundraising."

Fundraising, as a skill, requires that university presidents invest time and energy in creating ways to invite corporations to explore opportunities to *invest* in their college or university. This ability to fundraise goes far beyond soliciting sponsorships and finances with no return on the investment. Corporations' influence on college and university campuses range from building large and important facilities, to establishing laboratories, to funding research, and to becoming instrumental in the development of the curriculum and instruction. This is especially true for areas such as science and engineering. The capacity to invest in human capital begins with the college and university president. It is at this level that the opportunities and relationships emerge. This is not always the

case at many HBCUs. Many corporations believe that HBCUs are only interested in the corporate practice of signing over large checks with no strings attached.

The Economy

The impact of the economy on the corporation is yet another barrier to recruiting at HBCUs. During hard economic times, corporations are forced to minimize their financial support to external organizations. Hence, recruitment activities such as participation in job fairs are often suspended. Ninety-four percent of corporations maintain that, especially during economic downturns, HBCUs should keep in mind that the pursuit of job opportunities for their students—not financial sponsorships—is primary. Thus, in order to ensure the continued presence of corporations on their campuses, HBCUs should demonstrate greater flexibility and financial accommodations to corporations.

Many corporations perceive that HBCUs' focus on corporate sponsorship overshadows what is in the best interest of their students. Should corporations seek to be present on campus to implement activities such as career counseling, recruitment for summer jobs and internships, and future employment? If so, many HBCUs do not provide passage to corporations unless they pay dearly for it. In her interview, Elizabeth expresses her reservations about HBCUs' overall responsibility to students compared to their pursuit of corporate sponsorship:

HBCUs must understand and have greater flexibility concerning corporations' [financial] good years and bad years; they should have a more welcoming environment for corporations [...] one that excuses the corporation from being a major sponsor but also allows the corporation to come and offer job opportunities to the students. The students are the ones that should be the winners in all of this. I'm not saying that there aren't other things to satisfy, such as fundraising goals, but at the end of the day I think placing the students from your university is really a big responsibility, and helping them. And I'm not sure that they're always helping them the best way that they could.

Nearly 80 percent of corporations that enter into periods of economic uncertainty find that the business area most heavily affected is human resources. Reducing labor costs for most corporations is a primary means of surviving economic hardship. As a strategic response to economic uncertainty, corporations tend to institute a freeze on hiring and terminate existing positions through layoffs and early retirements. Furthermore, recruitment efforts at American colleges and universities are usually interrupted or halted. Hence, HBCUs render themselves highly vulnerable to the suspension of corporate recruiting, given their preoccupation with securing corporate funding through job fairs and similar recruitment activities. One interviewee, Mark, a vice president of human resources, comments on how the economy affects not only the number of colleges and universities where recruiting occurs but also the estimated number of new college hires:

Well, things have changed significantly for us because of the economy. Two years ago we were recruiting at close to one hundred colleges and universities and we had a formal university relations office. Right now we're recruiting overall at about 17 or 18 colleges. Two years ago, three years ago, our college numbers [new hires] were about 800. This year and last year our numbers were closer to 100. We've shifted from throwing out a wide net across the whole country to probably more regional in terms of a good number of schools in the Mid-Atlantic and Northeast, from Duke up through MIT and RPI.

Faculty

For those corporations that persist beyond the rudimentary career fair relationship, other recruiting efforts extend to establishing ties with HBCU faculty. Over half of corporations complain that faculty at HBCUs are absent from activities involving the potential placement of students in corporations. They argue that their lack of involvement in identifying and grooming students for competitive job opportunities is noticeable and unfortunate. Students who are interested in employment opportunities are perceived as having to fend for themselves. In general, corporations

observe that students rarely receive help from professors with preparation for interviews, presentation of resumes, or references.

Furthermore, faculty's lack of participation in corporate-sponsored workshops, seminars, job fairs, and research activities is perceived as disregarding the opportunity to interact, network, and negotiate with representatives from the corporate sector. In fact, many corporations view their absence in most corporate activities as simply a demonstration of disinterest in what companies have to offer, not only to faculty but also to their students. For many companies, this is quite disturbing. Mark explains further in his interview:

We invite faculty from a wide range of HBCUs to participate in industry workshops and seminars. We also offer, at little to no financial expense, training sessions for faculty introducing new and innovative technologies ... you know, we view these as opportunities to build bridges and establish relationships with those individuals in the classroom. We also offer HBCU faculty internships and research opportunities with the corporation during the summer months. There has been little interest on the part of faculty to either learn more about what we can offer them or even their students. However, in the case of predominantly white colleges and universities, this is typically not the case.

The One-Shot Deal

In addition to qualms about the high costs and poor quality of career fairs, lengthy time commitments, negative attitudes, inflexibility, poor college leadership, and disengaged faculty members, many corporations frequently argue that recruiting for diversity at HBCUs is no longer a one-shot deal. In fact, recent corporate diversity strategies at HBCUs call for long-term and ongoing strategic approaches.

Although corporations' perceptions of recruiting experiences at HBCUs make it difficult to maintain substantive relationships, it is interesting to note that such experiences have led human resources professionals to reassess and revise their recruitment strategies. Because of negative experiences, corporations are choosing to slowly relinquish their traditional role as financiers and sponsor recruiting efforts focused on

mentoring, internships, and corporate-university research partnerships. Hence, the process of recruiting HBCU students will occur over time rather than as a one-shot deal at local campus events. As corporations usher in new strategies for recruiting women and minority students, they report an interest in doing so at a smaller and select group of HBCUs. According to Sharon, a director of diversity in this study:

It's not a one-time thing. It's a combination of ongoing relationships; there's no one-time activity. So obviously some of the best relationships, if you want to talk about strategies that work, are again a long-time commitment to a school and a willingness to make the commitment of three to five years in a place where you're going to have consistency in that relationship. Then, you'll start to see the fruits of your labor. So having a career fair at a school that doesn't even know very much about your company in one year definitely is not going to get you good job candidates.

Some corporations acknowledge constraints to consistency in recruiting competitive students from HBCUs. They argue that long-term and ongoing recruitment strategies would permit the time necessary to strengthen ties with HBCUs as well as generate a wealth of desirable, competent, and competitive job candidates. Future diversity efforts at HBCUs will become more flexible and extensive as well as include faculty and current employees of corporations. For example, existing employees who are alumni of HBCUs will serve as recruiting agents for the corporation. Sharon explains further:

So, we must develop strategies that address what we are going to do to develop relationships with professors. What are we going to do to develop relationships with the students? To get our name out there, we're going to have to make some hires, and then after we've made those hires, we have to make sure those employees are happy with our company so that when they go back as alumni to that school, and are recruiting members—because we want to make sure that the people that we've hired go back to their colleges and do more recruiting—then they can talk about the wonderful job that they have at the company along with the great experience that

they're having, and then they can serve as mentors on how students can succeed and become essential employees for that company. These are ongoing efforts; it's not a matter of a one-shot thing.

Unlike twenty years ago, corporations are no longer limited to recruiting a diverse talent pool from American colleges and universities. In fact, more and more corporations are focusing their attention on the growing number of women and minority science and engineering associations. Although there are at least twenty-five IT related academic disciplines offered in American colleges and universities, many of these disciplines are represented by at least one professional association.

Women and Minority Science and Engineering Associations

The overarching goal of women and minority science and engineering associations is to attract and retain diverse populations in information technology. These professional groups, through education, training, mentoring, and financial sponsorships, are vehicles for professionalizing women and minorities entering or currently working in information technology professions. These organizations may, in fact, be ideal resources for any science and engineering industry that seeks to increase diversity in its talent pool.

As my survey data reveal, corporations with diversity strategies have increasingly formed organizational ties to several women and minority science and engineering groups. Table 5.1 reports loadings for three rotated principal components extracted from a covariance matrix of twenty-nine women and minority science and engineering associations. The table reports one factor analysis for all women and minority associations. My findings on factor (1) show that all types of women and minority science and engineering associations—women, black, and other minority associations—score positively on this dimension. Generally, this suggests that corporations demonstrate a pattern of affiliation with a wide range of women and minority science and engineering associations.

Although somewhat statistically weaker and more ambiguous, factor (2) clusters black science and engineering associations, and factor (3) slightly distinguishes women science and engineering groups. Taken

Table 5.1 Rotated Principal Components Analysis of Women/ Minority Science and Engineering Associations

Women/Minority Science and Engineering Professional Association	Factor		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
American Association of Women Entrepreneurs	.206	.189	.727
American Indian Science & Engineering Society	.306	.406	.633
Association for Puerto Ricans in Science & Engineering	.594	.239	.592
Association of Muslim Scientists & Engineers	.498	.158	.542
Association for Women in Science (AWIS)	.396	.687	.115
Black Data Processing Association (BDPA)	.264	.495	.479
Black Engineer.com	.383	.801	.200
Black Geeks Online	.724	.325	.375
Catalyst	.825	.269	.360
Chinese Software Professionals Association	.658	.142	.526
Institute for Women & Technology (IWT)	.685	.607	.548
Korean American Scientists & Engineers Association	.905	.163	.265
Minority Science & Engineering Program	.531	.512	.427
Native Americans in Science	.610	.327	.577
National Action Council on Minorities in Engineering	.420	.545	.518
National Association for Minority Engineering Admin.	.411	.255	.675
National Association of Mathematicians (NAM)	.721	.346	.414
National Council of Black Scientists & Engineers	.477	.691	.116
National Network of Minority Women in Science	.554	.226	.665
National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE)	.132	.856	.240
National Technical Association	.878	.191	.201
Society for Advancement of Chicanos & Native American Science	.801	.217	.323
Society for Hispanic Professional Engineers & Scientists	.520	.661	.238
Society of Mexican American Engineers & Scientists	.814	.328	.251
Society of Women Engineers (SWE)	.504	.792	.284
Southeastern Consortium for Minorities in Engineering	.819	.200	.358
Women in Engineering Programs & Advocates Network	.446	.375	.538
Women in Technology (WIT)	.299	.619	.559
<i>Eigenvalue</i>	19.0	2.49	1.43
<i>Variance Explained</i>	32.3	53.9	73.9
<i>Number of Firms</i>	83	83	83

together, my data reveal that corporations do not target certain science and engineering associations while ignoring others, but recognize that they are all important sources for recruiting women and minority talent.

Advertisements

Corporations affiliated with women and minority science and engineering associations are certain about the nature of that affiliation. Nearly 80 percent of corporations are linked primarily to these groups through the procurement of advertisements. In this case, there is no substantive relationship or full range of recruiting efforts with these organizations. These groups are simply avenues for publicizing employment opportunities and internships with the corporation. Surprisingly, some corporations are not interested in developing long-term and ongoing relationships with these groups. Since the 1990s, corporations have used these advertising opportunities to demonstrate a link to the association. This encourages the perception that the corporation is “diversity friendly” and a good corporate citizen. However, its involvement with many of the professional associations goes little beyond its printed image or logo in its advertisement. In his interview, Matthew provides a further explanation:

More than likely, I’m going to buy advertising space on women and minority organizations’ Websites versus trying to develop some sort of relationship because unfortunately my need is immediate, and I need to get candidates in here, and I need women and minority candidates. And I understand your vision statement, I understand what you want to do, but my need right now is to get someone on board *now*, and I don’t have time to come to your meetings on a monthly basis, participate and perhaps become a member of your board—I don’t need all of that. I need to hire a qualified female or minority candidate.

Sponsorships

Similar to their experiences with HBCUs, over 75 percent of corporations express concerns about the high financial costs of doing business with women and minority science and engineering associations. However, despite such discontent, they recognize that there are benefits to sponsoring

these organizations. Typically motivated by mandates and public approval, over half of corporations give annually to these professional associations. From a distance, demonstrated financial support shows that the corporation is in agreement with what the organization stands for, its mission, and purpose. However, financial backing can misrepresent behaviors and practices of the corporation. Sponsorship does not mean fair and equitable hiring decisions.

Because so many corporations choose to advertise in women and minority professional groups' printed materials and on their Websites, the corporation must gain an advantage by doing so. In fact, these advantages are multiple. In addition to perceptions of being a good corporate citizen, companies gain some political leverage as well. They associate sponsorship of women and minority professional groups with mandates such as Equal Employment and Affirmative Action practices. This calls into question their genuine and legitimate concern to wield their influence toward addressing the unique needs of women and minority professionals. Many human resources professionals comment on the sponsorship of women and minority science and engineering groups. For example, Stacy, a human resources senior specialist in this study, notes:

I think that a lot of companies are willing to shell out, okay, \$5,000 or \$7,500 or \$10,000 to say that, okay, we're partnering with the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE); that comes out to be a check mark on the Affirmative Action program or the recruiting program, that we are a gold-level sponsor for the NSBE conference. But being able to truly see what your results are from that, I think, is a lot more long-term, and I'm not sure why. But I want to stop far short of saying that I think the organizations are being opportunistic in trying to bring in funds, because I know in terms of running the events there's a lot of cost and a lot of time and a lot of money involved.

Other Recruitment Activities

Many corporations' recruitment strategies are not limited to organizational ties with HBCUs and women and minority science and engineering associations. Forty-two percent of companies participate in other distinguishing and common features of recruiting efforts focused on women

and minorities. Although the processes and conditions under which recruiting efforts occur are important, a discussion of specific recruitment activities allows for a better understanding of what practices are associated with the adoption of diversity strategies. These activities provide a lens for examining what corporations actually do when “doing diversity.”

Many corporations engage in a full spectrum of highly visible recruitment activities. As shown in Table 5.2, independent sample t-tests

Table 5.2 Recruitment Activities for Women and Minority Job Candidates on Adoption of Diversity Strategies (% Yes)

Independent Variable	Firms with Diversity Strategies	Firms without Diversity Strategies	t
Host Dinners & Receptions for Professional Groups	40.0	25.0	1.584
Sponsor and Conduct Workshops at Professional Meetings	38.6	32.6	.602
Participate with Science & Engineering Societies	71.1	30.1	4.284***
Contribute Financially to Professional Societies	50.0	25.0	2.598***
Advertise in Magazines, Websites, Newspapers, etc.	64.4	46.1	1.817*
Personal Referrals from Key Players in Industry	81.8	75.0	.799
Personal Referrals from Current Employees	95.5	90.0	1.003
Participate with Local Community Groups	61.3	36.5	2.478**
Establish Training Programs with Other Organizations	41.8	17.3	2.647***
Work Collaboratively with the U.S. Military Branches	60.0	23.0	3.949***
Serve on Professional Associations Governance Boards	51.1	21.1 30.1	3.186*** 4.284***
<i>Total Number of Firms</i>			
Diversity Strategies	45		
No Diversity Strategies	52		

*Significant at the $p < .10$.

**Significant at the $p < .05$.

***Significant at the $p < .01$.

indicate that corporations with diversity strategies are hosting campus receptions and dinners, sponsoring campus workshops and seminars, and participating in campus job fairs. Corporations advertise in career magazines, on campus Websites, and in newspapers where they regularly offer internship and cooperative opportunities. In addition, they target women- and minority-serving colleges and universities and obtain personal referrals from faculty members, current employees, and key players in the industry and government sectors. These companies indicate that they serve on college governance boards and sponsor school-to-work transition programs. In essence, they do it all. The adoption of diversity strategies, then, implies that there are a host of activities associated with recruiting women and minorities. This, of course, does not mean that these activities will prove successful (as is the case with recruitment efforts at HBCUs). But they are visible and documentable and can be used to turn attention away from corporations' practices of inequality and discrimination.

When I examined these practices under a more rigorous statistical method, several recruitment practices do not remain statistically significant. However, as shown in Table 5.3, there are some recruitment practices that show robust effects on the adoption of diversity strategies. Practices most indicative of diversity strategies are partnering with K—12 schools, obtaining referrals from current employees and key players in the industry and government sectors, serving on college governance boards, and sponsoring college-to-work transition programs.

However, Table 5.3 also shows that the effects of other recruitment practices, such as sponsoring activities on college and university campuses and targeting women- and minority-serving colleges and universities, are reduced in multivariate analysis. In particular, my survey findings bolster earlier explanations of corporations' experiences of recruiting at HBCUs. In contrast, they indicate that *networks* are the most significant inter-organizational conduits of diversity strategies. Simply put, establishing partnerships that involve common interests, goals, and practices is key to "doing diversity." Employee referrals, especially, are becoming a preferred method of recruiting women and minority talent. Corporate recruiters do not have to leave the office. Referral bonuses encourage employees to identify qualified and well-trained candidates who are likely to be a good

Table 5.3 Logistic Estimates for Recruitment Activities for Women/Minority Job Candidates on Diversity Strategies

Additional Variable	Firm Size B(SE)	Firm Age B(SE)	Firm Revenue B(SE)	Additional Variable B(SE)	Model X ²	Pseudo R ²	Sample Size
Hosting Dinners & Receptions for Professional Groups	.126(.375)	.308(.387)	.239(.203)	.335(.540)	7.300	.086	81
Sponsor & Conduct Workshops at Professional Meetings	.181(.375)	.276(.392)	.235(.204)	.026(.513)	6.174	.074	80
Participate with Science & Engineering Societies	.276(.433)	.639(.427)	.122(.224)	1.821(.587)	17.603	.195	81
Contribute Financially to Professional Societies	.163(.385)	.468(.418)	.140(.213)	1.057(.537) ^B	10.179 ^B	.119	80
Advertise in Magazines, Websites, Newspapers, etc.	.117(.379)	.435(.401)	.203(.208)	.558(.494)	8.200	.096	81
Referrals from Key Players in Industry	.200(.377)	.279(.392)	.237(.203)	.344(.562)	6.549	.079	80
Referrals from Current Employees	.191(.378)	.353(.393)	.268(.205)	.200(1.104)	7.991 ^A	.095	80
Participate with Local Community Groups & Associations	.202(.386)	.379(.408)	.161(.211)	1.055(.491) ^B	10.922 ^B	.128	80
Establish Training Programs with Other Organizations	.186(.391)	.433(.426)	.115(.216)	1.497(.616)	11.869 ^B	.139	79
Work Collaboratively with the U. S. Military Branches	.025(.403)	.366(.426)	.183(.215)	1.653(.553) ^C	17.315 ^C	.192	81
Serve on Professional Associations Governance Boards	.050(.389)	.247(.404)	.238(.209)	1.156(.552) ^B	11.176 ^B	.132	79

Significant at the p<.10 BSignificant at the p<.05. Significant at the p<.01.

fit with the corporation. Mark expresses his preference for employee referral programs in his interview:

I think the people who work for the organization probably know the needs and are probably in a better position than anyone else to identify people who are going to do well within the organization. So a lot of times they're picking someone who they feel can survive. And of course they're going to look like them. And if the bonus is big enough, you will be able to find them.

In sum, although corporations' concerns and criticisms of HBCUs are directly aimed at the conditions associated with their recruiting practices, corporations best capture the attitudes and behaviors of university administrators, staff, and faculty. Rarely do they mention concerns about the academic preparation and training of HBCU students. Corporations' frustrations with HBCUs are in direct response to administrative practices and political workings of the institution.

Several corporations admit candidly that many HBCUs employ the wrong people to interact with and engage them. From the college president to the career counselor, those with institutional responsibility for corporate relations are perceived to be the wrong people. As a consequence, corporations believe that they forfeit their position to ensure the best employment opportunities for their students. The inflexibility of HBCUs to cooperate with corporations suggests intentional practices and behaviors. Institutional and even cultural resistance to "white" dominated corporations and their preferred structures and behaviors are likely to frustrate and challenge companies to eventually seek other alternatives for predicting a consistent flow of information technology talent from other organizations.

Whether motivated by their own self-interest or driven by the moral imperative to do the right thing, many corporations are *changing* their strategic approach to recruiting at HBCUs, justifying such change in terms of efficiency, noting extraordinary savings in time and money. Toward this end, corporations are also turning inward and relying on employee networks to attract women and minority new hires. The political, legal, and even economic times allow corporations to enter and engage new and alternative ways of recruiting and hiring women and minorities. Diversity strategies, influenced by Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action practices, provide the impetus for strategically seeking

out diversity. Therefore, when one strategy does not work, the corporation chooses to seek out another in order to meet its critical needs.

One does not have to draw intellectual conclusions about resource dependency to understand that the environment, be it social, political, or economic, is a significant force shaping the strategic choices of corporations. To put it plainly, the role of HBCUs as suppliers of a diverse talent pool is changing and the dependence is shifting to other sources—at least in part, majority institutions and current employees of the corporation.

The nature of the relationship between women and minority science and engineering associations and corporations is essentially financial. Characterized by corporate sponsorship of national conferences and the procurement of advertising space on Websites and in widely circulated publications, corporations' ties to women and minority professional groups has become an important source of good publicity rather than a valuable mechanism for attracting a diverse candidate pool. Frankly, many women and minority organizations are faced with the daunting task of raising funds to have professional meetings and conferences. Corporations, then, serve a vital role. On the other hand, corporations do benefit from favorable publicity associated with women and minority groups. Is this ultimately about a moral imperative to do the right thing—to be a good corporate citizen? Perhaps this *quid pro quo* behavior works for everyone. However, the misconception that there exists a real working relationship between these groups and the corporation tends to misinform individuals' perceptions of the work environment and policies that directly impact career opportunities of women and minorities. The old phrase "You can't judge a book by its cover!" is applicable here.

Finally, the very nature of corporations' relationships with women and minority organizations in general tends to reflect the value and significance of these organizations. Surprisingly, corporations fail to recall the relevance of HBCUs, at least historically, as a vital means of producing well-educated and well-trained women and minorities. What has happened now compared to the heyday of corporate recruitment at HBCUs in the '60s, '70s, and '80s? Have alleviated political pressures on corporations provided an escape route for them to alter their relationships with HBCUs? Nonetheless, the consequences of relinquishing organizational ties and instituting fundamental changes in recruitment strategies will be felt most severely by the next generation of young women and minorities pursuing careers in information technology.

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Diversity in Corporations *Making it Work: An Overview*

Youlanda M. Gibbons

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